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HEROISM

IN HUMBLE LIFE



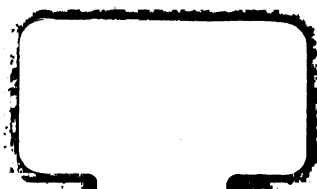
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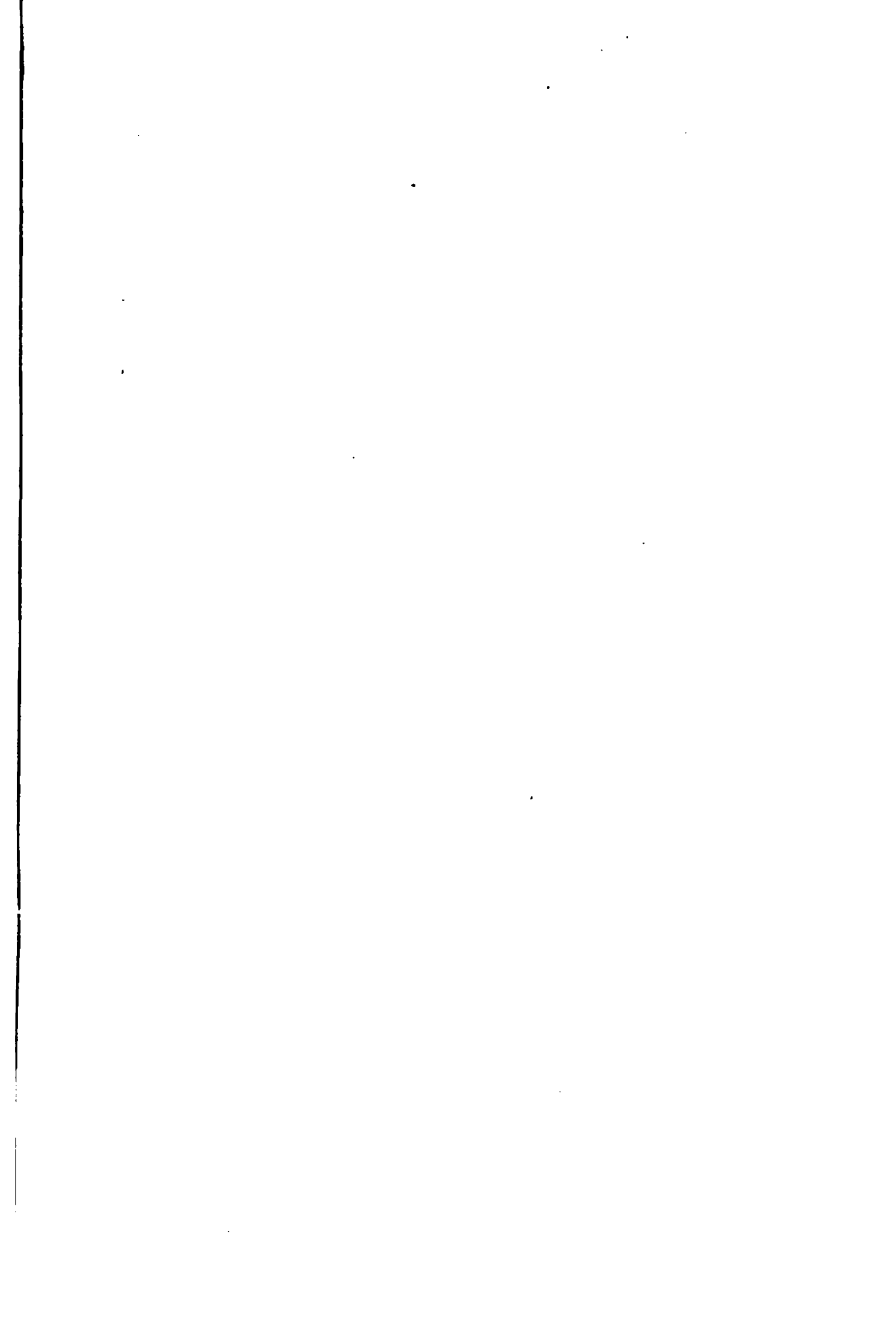
BY

THE REV. E. N. HOARE, M.A.











A FRIEND IN NEED.

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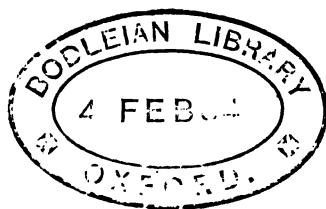
HEROISM IN HUMBLE LIFE.



AN IDLE SON.

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T. NELSON AND SONS,
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK.



HEROISM IN HUMBLE LIFE;

OR,

THE STORY OF BEN PRITCHARD
AND CHARLIE CAMPION.

A Temperance Tale.

BY

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ETC. ETC.



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CARELESS CAMPION.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER AND SON.

YOU could not choose but like him, as he sat there so free and easily,—his clump boots dangling in mid-air,—across the corner of the well-worn and well-scrubbed stout deal table. It had need to be a stout one, for Charlie Campion was no light weight; nor was that a light hand with which he kept digging a bradawl into that corner of the much-enduring piece of furniture which appeared between his extended legs.

If you wish to sit in Charlie Campion's attitude, you must turn your back to your table, and consequently to any one who may be employed at the farther end of it. Thus, without giving his body a twist, the lad could not see (perhaps he did not wish to see) the pained and anxious looks with which his mother, who was clearing away the remains of the mid-day meal, from time to time regarded him. Mrs. Campion did not like to see her table subjected to such rough treatment; still less did she like the manners of her son, or the tone and drift of the disjointed and jerky conversation that had been kept up

between them since dinner. It was not by any means the first time Charlie had sat across the corner of the table; but to-day his back was kept turned in a style that was not at all usual with the restless, loose-limbed lad, and there was, to his mother, something ominous and unpleasant in the swinging of his legs. A year ago Mrs. Campion would have expressed her feelings sharply enough, and Master Charlie would have found himself ordered off the table, and out of the house too, without much ceremony. Yes; even six or three months ago she would not have suffered her table to be thus scored and prodded without remonstrance. But now she had a reason for restraining herself, and therefore when she spoke it was softly enough, almost timidly.

"Won't you be late for work, Charlie, if you don't make haste?"

Charlie seemed to take no notice, and to be altogether absorbed in trying to drop his bradawl into a hole that, by frequent stabs, he had made large enough to receive it easily. Mrs. Campion could stand it no longer, and so said sharply,—

"It's little you have to do, destroying the table you've scarce earned the price of yet."

"I'm not for work to-day," responded the lad, half sullenly, half ashamedly.

"Not for work?" began Mrs. Campion, in a shrill startled voice. Then adding softly, as if regretting her former hasty words, "It's a bad beginning, Charlie boy. But I suppose you think yourself a man now."

"And ain't I, mother?" he asked quickly, turning his head with a bright smile, intended to soothe her displeasure.

"Ay, you're a man,—man enough to begin these idling, loafing ways. But it's well for you this day that your mother never said she *wasn't for work*; though many a day she wasn't fit for it."

"I'm not an idler, nor yet a loafer neither," growled Charlie, who felt himself sorely and justly hit by his mother's words. "But I've business on hand to-day; and that's what I want to speak to you about, if only you'd let me."

"I'm sure I've not hindered you speaking. But maybe your conscience has," responded Mrs. Campion, in a taunting tone.

"Come, old lady, perhaps you've hit it there. But let's be friends, and I'll tell you all about it."

Poor Charlie was not in luck. As, with a sudden effort, he made this conciliatory speech, he threw himself back at full length on the short table, so as to bring his face, as he fancied, right under his mother's. But instead of this, he brought his head with a crash into the bowl in which Mrs. Campion was "washing up" after dinner. With a quickly reversed motion of his body, Charlie brought himself bolt upright on his feet, and turned round laughing, almost before his mother could realize what had happened. But when she had time to look about her, Mrs. Campion saw nothing to laugh at: she saw two of her best tumblers smashed, and never considered that several of the fragments might be sticking in the back of her son's head,—a fact that he was just beginning to realize. She saw the bowl upset and broken, and, almost worst of all, the clean floor covered with greasy water, which was rapidly disappearing down the chinks between the boards.

A life of hard work and anxiety, endured by a frame not strong at the best, and which had of late grown somewhat stiff and rheumatic, had not tended to sweeten Mrs. Champion's temper. We may therefore pardon, though we need not chronicle, the first few hasty words in which she addressed her son, who had by this time ceased to laugh, and was carefully feeling the back of his head, and then surveying, with a comic air, his blood-stained fingers. In a moment the woman had untied her apron, and was down on her knees mopping up what was left of the water.

"A pretty to do there'll be now with old Selsby," said the poor woman bitterly, as she looked up from her kneeling position. "It's not the first time he's complained of your dancings and prancings. And now he'll say we are letting the water down on his old bald head on purpose."

Charlie forgot the woful state of his own head as his lively imagination completed the picture suggested by his mother's last words. He saw old Selsby sitting at his office table in the room beneath. Then he watched a great drop, as it grew larger, and quivered a moment, on the ceiling above. And when it suddenly, silently, and swiftly dropped, with a little pat, just in the centre of the bald spot on the old man's head, and when he quickly looked up, just in time to receive a second drop on the top of his red nose, the lad's joy was full; he burst into a roar of laughter that brought Mrs. Champion to her feet, pale and angry.

"You're a great big fool," she cried; "and you'll just get us put out of the place with your nonsense."

"But, mother, my head is bleeding," pleaded the

lad, in a tone of mock fear, as he displayed three fingers tipped with blood.

"Serve you right." And that was all the satisfaction he got from his mother, who was dolefully picking up the fragments, placing the largest underneath, and thus making a sad little pile of broken glass and crockery. It was now the young man's turn to be angry. With a sudden flush he turned to the door, exclaiming,—

"Well, if that's the way of it, the quicker I clear out of this, and set up for myself, the better. And that's just about the long and short of what I had to say to you."

"Your room's better than your company, if you can't conduct yourself," said Mrs. Champion sternly.

"Then I'll leave you the room to yourself, with all my heart."

The door closed behind him with a bang; and thus mother and son parted in anger.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. CAMPION LOOKS BACK, AND TRIES TO LOOK FORWARD.

THERE had often before been "tiffs," but never so serious a disagreement as this seemed likely to prove. And what had it all been about? Many of the tiffs had had sufficient, even grave cause,—for Charlie had been a troublesome and mischievous lad; but this last dispute seemed the result of accident and mere temper. Yet it could scarcely be that. There must have been a fire smouldering when the flame so suddenly and fiercely broke forth,—so Mrs. Campion felt sure; and therefore, when she had tidied up her disordered room, she set herself down to think over what had happened. Why did she feel so weary and low-spirited? Why did she feel at that moment more despairing, more ready to lie down and die, than ever she had during long years of privation and toil? What had been the meaning of those last words of her son? Why did the sound of his heavy boots as he descended the stairs still echo like a knell in her ears, seeming to bear him further and further away from her as they grew fainter in the distance?

Mrs. Campion's face, as she sat thinking and thus questioning with herself, was worth looking at. It

was a worn, anxious, sallow face ; but once it must have been quite beautiful. Her hair was abundant, and coal black, save where a few conspicuous white streaks appeared. The thin, compressed, and smileless lips, with the wrinkles about the small mouth, told a tale of much suffering resolutely and silently borne. But though the face was thus withered and weary, there gleamed forth from the sharp hazel eyes a fire that nothing could quench. And the ghastly paleness of her face drew attention to the beautiful dark eye-lashes and somewhat too heavy and often contracted eye-brows above. It was a face to be respected, yet one to be pitied too. There was courage in it, but little softness ; resolute endurance, but no abiding peace. As the woman rose to look through the window you saw that her figure was tall and well put together ; but her strength—for she had been strong—must have resulted rather from an iron will acting on a fairly healthy body, than from any special muscular development. But now Mrs. Campion's strength was a thing of the past : her tall frame was bent ; her thin, sinewy arms were stiff and shrivelled, and her face wore a settled expression of suffering. A sad spectacle the poor thing was. She had done brave battle with a hard and cruel world ; she had held her own against great odds,—and with what result ? Now, at fifty, she was a broken, exhausted woman. She had never been one to look forward much, and used to boast that she was no dreamer. To-day's work being hard, she was thankful if she could get a good night's rest. As to what might be next month or next year, she resolutely refused to trouble herself ; as to what might be beyond the

last sleep on earth, that was a question that had absolutely no interest for her. She supposed that she believed what other people believed. She washed her boys on Saturday night, and sent them to Sunday school next day. For herself, she was self-denying, hard-working, perfectly sober and honest,—in her own opinion at least. What more could be required of her? Should there really be a life after this one, as she professed to believe, why, she would do her best in it, even as she had done in this. But what in her secret soul she thought she would like best, after so many years of rising early and late taking rest, was one long unbroken sleep. Yet sometimes, of late years especially, she had asked herself if it were at all likely things would turn out as she wished; or would there not be a relentless call to awake from *that* sleep, even as she had been so often summoned by the horrid clanging of early bells to go forth to a day of toil? And yet another question had come still more recently,—would she, after all, be *satisfied* with such a sleep, supposing it possible? And as bodily infirmities increased, as “the things seen and temporal” became ever less hopeful and more wearisome, this woman, who had lived to the world, was surprised, almost frightened, to find herself at times consumed by a new craving to learn what reality there might be in those things “unseen and eternal” of which she had so often heard.

It was only at times that this craving was upon her, and more frequently than not it was remorselessly stifled. This afternoon Mrs. Campion was angry and full of bitterness; and as she gazed with fierce, unblinking eyes into the glowing fire, her face

was hard and very sad. As her thoughts travelled back over long past years, there came no peaceful assurance that true labour can never be in vain; rather it seemed to her to have been altogether vain. She had indeed done with her might that which her hand found to do; she had shrunk from no labour, and denied herself every luxury. But, alas! no work of hers had ever yet been done "as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Poor Mrs. Campion! she knew nothing of the blessedness of those who, when God's time comes, "rest from their labour" peaceably and calmly, because knowing that "their works do follow them." Therefore did she look backward angrily, not forward cheerfully.

Some eighteen years before the date at which our story opens Mrs. Campion had been left a widow. One day her husband, who was a bricklayer, had gone forth to his work at dawn, bright and good-humoured as he almost always was. At noon he was brought home a corpse, having fallen from the scaffold on which he was working. It was a terrible blow to the poor woman, whose life had hitherto been full of sunshine. Her married life had been pure and happy. An orphan, without brother or sister, and brought up by distant relatives, her husband was all in all to her. And when in due time their union was blessed with two bright, healthy boys, the young wife thought her happiness complete. Then fell the sudden stroke; and the woman who had risen so light-hearted, found herself, when the sun was setting, absolutely alone in the world, save for the two children,—one fretting in unconscious sympathy on her breast; the other, scarcely less helpless, stifling his sobs in her skirt.

It was a terrible time that followed. Willie was but four years old when his father was killed, and Charlie only just turned fifteen months. The mother was unable to work. Her late husband's small savings melted away; then every little ornament that had made the house bright and homelike disappeared; next the furniture diminished, till, when little Hugh was born, nothing was left but the barest necessities. Poor little mite! coming thus fatherless into the world, he presented a sad contrast to his brothers. Thin and weary looking, with the stamp of sorrow on his tiny face, the mere sight of him would have touched a tender heart. But whatever tenderness that bright-eyed, dark-haired girl might ever have had in her, had apparently been dried up as she passed through that terrible furnace of affliction. This child had hindered her making a living, both before and after its birth, and therefore she had no love for it. The plaintive little face and mournful cry drew forth no sympathy, serving as they did to remind the mother of the terrible change that had taken place in her circumstances.

But however hardened by misfortune, Mrs. Campion was not a woman to despair. Her tragic misfortune had brought her friends and sympathizers; and as soon as she was able to undertake it, abundance of employment, in the way of washing, charring, etc., flowed in on her. It was a hard struggle, but she endured it bravely; and at the end of almost twenty years was able to say that she had never received sixpence in charity, or without giving full value for it.

What more could she say? She had brought

three sons to manhood,—for even poor, pining Hugh was now grown up. Did they love her, any of them? Would they be a solace and help to her declining years? The eldest could not do much. Obligated, when scarcely more than an infant himself, to act as nurse to his two younger brothers, while their mother was out working, he had received scarce any education. Steady, hard-working, and somewhat stupid, William Campion looked ten years older than he really was. A common labourer, without any trade, his wages were of course but small. That, however, had not prevented him marrying while yet a mere boy; and now at three-and-twenty he was the anxious and overburdened father of two children. He did what he could for his mother; but it was not much, and, as year after year domestic cares increased, it was likely to grow less, as Mrs. Campion was the first to recognize.

As for Hugh, his life had been for years a long-protracted whimper. His mother, as we have said, had never loved the little fellow—regarding him as, at least in part, the cause of her early misery. Even had she wished to be kind to him, the hard circumstances of the first years of her widowhood made it impossible to give to the sickly infant the care that he required. But little Hugh, instead of dying, as everybody said he would, gradually cried and sobbed himself into a state of quiet stupor that might pass for contentment. Then, when he grew older, he used persistently to creep to school, sometimes in the wake of his brother Charlie, but not seldom by himself, when that lively young gentleman was playing truant, as he often was. Hugh was a sallow, dark-haired

child, resembling his mother; while Willie and Charlie—the latter especially—were more like their father. He had a fierce temper, which, however, he had early learned to control, finding that his bodily powers were not equal to the conflicts with stronger boys into which his passion used to hurry him. Thus he grew up silent and self-controlled; and nobody could tell what thoughts, of good or evil, were finding place in him. Only, at times, he would shoot out from those small hazel eyes, so like his mother's, a fierce silent glance that made people feel uncomfortable. Thus Hugh Campion was not a favourite. He limped a little as he walked, and always had a cough. The neighbours said, "It was a pity he had not been taken when he was young;" and when the mother overheard them say it, she felt no anger. Now, however, to the surprise of everybody, Hugh was able to make a living for himself. It was not a very good one; but, at least, he was no expense to his mother. Even the slight education he had received proved most useful, enabling him to take a situation as messenger and light porter in a large warehouse where a good knowledge of reading and writing was essential. A hard place enough it proved. At best his hours were long; and as employers could not be expected to take his lameness into account, it was often very late indeed before Hugh, thus delayed in his movements, was heard limping up to the attic above Mr. Selsby's office, where he lived with his mother and Charlie. So much for Hugh.

CHAPTER III.

WAITING FOR CHARLIE.

IF the help that Willie and Hugh gave was small, it was yet more than had ever been expected. They counted for little while Charlie remained. Her second son had always been the widow's favourite; and she was glad to be able to do better for him than she had been able to do for her eldest. She resolved to strain every nerve to get the boy a trade; and, much to her credit, she succeeded in doing so. Several circumstances helped her. Just when the question had to be decided, What was to be done with Charlie? Mrs. Campion obtained charge of the block of offices in which she had since lived. There was no longer anything to pay for rent or coals or gas; and a certain, though small, money payment coming in weekly gave the poor woman a feeling of confidence and rest such as she had not known since her husband's death. By this time, too, poor patient little Willie had begun to bring something in. Thus Mrs. Campion was enabled to leave Charlie six months longer at school, and finally, to accept for him the offer, made long before for Willie by the building firm in whose employ Campion had been killed, that they would take the widow's son as an apprentice on favourable terms.

Thus things went well for Charlie, however hard others had had to work that his way might be made smooth. He took it all quite easily and good-humouredly, and really believed that he would have done as much for mother and brother as they had done for him. Always merry, and generally whistling, he faced every domestic difficulty with the genial question, "What's the odds, so long as we are happy?" never staying to inquire whether any one in the household was particularly happy except himself. He thought indeed that it was rather selfish of Willie to go off and get married while he, Charlie, was still an apprentice. But then, just about this time, Hugh had made his first successful effort to get employment; while that his mother should toil early and late seemed to him part of the natural order of things. He had never known her to do otherwise.

But now the time had come for testing the quality of that light-hearted heedlessness that so many people called good nature. The great effort of Mrs. Campion's life was over—Charlie was "out of his time," and had been for the last fortnight in receipt of a carpenter's full wages. That he had little or no account to give of his first week's pay did not surprise and hardly vexed his mother. "Fellows expected him to stand treat, and it looked mean and selfish to refuse."

"What's the odds about one week's pay, and that the first? Let's be happy, and say no more about it." So, in the morning, pleaded Charlie, who had the previous evening been decidedly "happy" with his friends; and Mrs. Campion was fain to be content. But things were not much better next week; and when Mrs. Campion hinted at the desirability of

making some definite arrangement about the expenses of house-keeping, her son seemed confused and worried. He thought it was unfair and "selfish" to ask him to contribute more than Willie used to do—not to mention what Hugh actually did. True, he was earning big wages; but then he had to work for them, and a skilled tradesman had a right to more indulgences than a labourer or a porter. Yet while the young man talked and tried hard to think thus, there was "a something" in the back-ground, as his mother felt sure, that rendered him embarrassed and almost morose.

Thus it had come to pass that when we first saw Charlie Campion he was keeping his back to his mother so persistently, swinging his legs so uneasily, and prodding the table so savagely.

It was one of Mrs. Campion's rare days at home, and for a wonder she now found herself with absolutely nothing to do. Accordingly, with a sense of sad luxuriousness, she surrendered herself to her thoughts. The short winter afternoon closed in dark and cold and wet; and as the light of the fire prevailed more and more in the twilight room, darker shadows seemed to gather in the lines of that sad, careworn face. For a long time Mrs. Campion sat perfectly motionless, gazing with fierce, unblinking eyes into the red embers. But she was not one accustomed to idleness or day-dreaming, and so, after a time, she gradually and unconsciously passed into the land of actual dreams.

Time slipped away, silently and unnoticed; the fire sank low, and as it shot up its last little warning flames, no reflection was flashed back from the now

fast-closed eyes ; so the effort was given up, and, after one great flash, all was dark, cold, and still.

The thoughts of the sleeper, still centred on Charlie, had travelled with him far away. He was once more a baby in her arms, and she looked with joy into his merry, glowing face. But then of a sudden the baby seemed to grow bigger and bigger ; she could no longer hold him in her arms, and the weight of him pressed on her till she could scarcely breathe ; then, with a great effort, she cried out, and in a moment the weight was gone, and her husband appeared, moving about the room and speaking kind words to her, as he had so often done. He struck a light and stooped over the fire, as if preparing something for her. How kind it was of him,—he who had to be at work so early ! Now baby would be all right. But where was he ? Gone—melted right through her arms ! and instead there was a great big lad sitting on the table and swinging his legs about. The room was almost dark, and the shadows were huge and perplexing : father and son got hopelessly mixed up together, and now the shadow-casting figure was that of the dead man as he had been twenty years ago, and now that of the wayward lad who had left her but a few hours previously. Gradually, however, her judgment was returning. She knew that she had been dreaming, yet she felt no less sure that the figure before her was real. During a few seconds, that for her might have been hours, she stared with open eyes at the stooping figure and dancing shadows. Then she saw that a man was bending over the grate, and endeavouring by means of a few crackling sticks to nurse back to life the black but still smoking

remains of the afternoon fire. She speculated vaguely who it might be ; and then, as her senses returned, and a warm glow began to light up the room, both husband and favourite son faded away, and she recognized Hugh.

Mrs. Campion did not move, but sat on, watching her youngest son with half-closed eyes. Her heart was full of bitterness. That vivid dream had brought all the long-lost past back to her,—its happiness, its hopes, its comforts,—and now to awake to this sad reality ! Where was Charlie ? Why did the question bring with it such a sense of foreboding, almost of despair ? Charlie was often, only too often, out of an evening. What had happened ? Why did she feel that he, too, was passing away from her, as her husband had done ? Then the events of the afternoon came back to her mind ; but they did not seem of sufficient importance to account for the miserable sense of abandonment and desolation that she now experienced. Still but half awake, the fancy came over her that she was condemned to spend the rest of her life sitting helpless in a dark, draughty room, in front of a struggling, smoky fire, that seemed only to “draw out” the cold and damp, and waited on by a thin, stooping, ghost-like figure, the mere shadow of a man.

Poor Hugh ! His was certainly not an attractive figure, and there was, no doubt, something funereal and ghostlike in his appearance as he moved about the room. He was dressed, as was usual with him, in one of Mr. Selsby’s cast-off black coats, and the stained and ill-fitting garment showed off his ungainly figure. When out of doors Hugh always wore a tall

"chimney-pot" hat, and limped along with the sieve-like remains of a brown silk umbrella firmly tucked under his arm. Now the umbrella stood dripping inside the fender; but the hat was still firmly fixed on the back of Hugh's head, having been pushed there during his efforts to blow up with his mouth the embers of the fire.

Having satisfied himself that the fire would not go out again, as it had done twice already, Hugh lighted the paraffin lamp; and carefully placing it so that the glare should not fall on his mother's eyes, began to sort out on the table a number of letters, which he drew from the ample pockets of his tight-fitting coat. There was something so solemn, alike in his appearance and in his methodical way of going to work, that Mrs. Campion could not repress a movement of impatience. Attracted by the sound, the young man turned round, and then limped over to where his mother was sitting. He touched her hand, and finding it very cold, brought a rug from his bed and spread it over her knees. Suddenly the woman's heart was melted: she did not move, but languidly opening her eyes, said softly, and in a sort of penitent tone, that surprised him,—

"I'm awake, Hugh. You're a kind good lad. God bless you!"

"I was afraid you were sick, mother, for it's not often you take a nap. When I came in, the kettle was all boiled away and the fire black out. I'd have said you were off out too, only I knew that wasn't your style of getting tea for your boys." He spoke cheerfully; but as she did not reply, added quickly, "Is anything wrong, mother? Where's Charlie?"

"Ay! where's Charlie? Where, indeed?" she repeated dreamily. Then suddenly rousing herself: "Haven't you seen him, Hugh? Hasn't he been in since dinner? What o'clock is it now?"

"It must be nigh ten by this time," said Hugh soothingly. "But you know, mother, Charlie is often as late as that, and later."

Mrs. Campion, who was now wide awake, and busying herself about the room, knew it well, but did not like to hear it said; so she answered Hugh a little sharply, and, concluding Charlie was out among his friends, and would soon be in, let the subject drop.

"Let's have a cup of tea, mother," suggested Hugh; "I'm nigh famished. You know I got no dinner."

While the meal was getting ready, the young man spread all the letters out before him in a double row, and commenced to address them from a list with which he was provided. The process was laborious and slow; for though Hugh wrote a very fair and distinct hand, his execution was by no means rapid or easy. Each letter was formed separately, and seemed to tax to the utmost the united energies of brain and hand in its production. Mrs. Campion watched her son as he toiled through one address and finished it with a triumphant little flourish.

"Aren't you for bed to-night, Hugh?" she asked dryly.

"Oh yes, mother, and for sleep too, as soon as I get these circulars addressed for Mr. Selsby; it won't take long."

"How much are you to have for them?"

"Well," said Hugh rather nervously, for his mother had strong opinions about the hard bargains Mr. Selsby

was wont to drive, "it's not exactly a matter of money this time; but I think he means to give me a new umbrella—that is, *his* old one, of course. You know I want a new one badly—and so does he, for the matter of that."

"So if he gets a new one, you'll get an old one," commented Mrs. Campion with a grim smile. "But I say, Hugh boy," she added, almost tenderly, "it will take you most of the night to direct all those."

"Oh, not at all. I'll spin through them in no time," he answered bravely; and cheered by his mother's unusual tone, he tried to write fast, and so blundered, and had to waste an envelope.

"Well, have a cup of tea to keep you awake anyhow; then I'll go to bed, and you can let in Charlie when he comes."

Hugh gladly accepted the invitation, pushed his envelopes aside, and set to with a will. While he ate and drank he wondered at his mother's altered tone, and speculated as to how nice it would be if she always spoke thus kindly and gently to him. Perhaps it might be, if once he were as helpful and bringing in as much as Charlie. But then there were his cough and his lameness, to neither of which did his mother conceal her dislike. No; he felt sure that whatever he might be earning, he never could hope to take a place in her affections beside that bright, handsome young man, who might even now be ascending the stairs.

Certainly somebody was ascending the stairs; both mother and son caught the sound, and looked towards the door. Who could it be? Not Charlie; for though the step was as quick as his, it was far lighter.

Visitors, especially on dark, wet nights, were not common at the top of that great pile of buildings; and Mrs. Champion turned very pale as there came a hurried knock at the door.

"See who it is, Hugh; I'm sure there's something wrong with your brother."

Now Hugh, though in many ways an excellent young man, as the reader will have already found out, was not a very brave one. Accordingly, before opening the door, he thought it best to inquire in the fiercest tones he could assume, "Who's there?" No answer coming, he added, yet more bravely, "It's late; you can't come in."

But he forgot that the door was unfastened, and therefore received a considerable shock, bodily and mental, when he found himself pushed back by a female figure that rushed past him into the room, borne along, as it were, by the fierce cold blast that came whirling and whistling up the stairs. It was a girl, carelessly clad, with no protection over her thin, light dress, which was evidently wet through; a small hat clung to the back of her head, and her hair and face were plentifully spotted over with rain-drops.

"Where's Charlie?" she cried. "I want my Charlie. Don't you dare to tell me, either of you, that he is not here! Where is he?"

Hugh stood speechless, still holding the door in his hand. Yet he knew the girl quite well. Mrs. Champion's memory or her eyes were not so quick.

"You've made some mistake, my poor girl," she said in a kindly tone; "there's no one belonging to you here."

"No one belonging to me!" shrieked the girl.

"Doesn't Charlie, Charlie Campion, belong to me? Don't you know I'm his wife? There, I didn't mean to tell his secret. But where is he, I say?"

Mrs. Campion sprang to her feet, and grasping the thin, wet shoulders, one with each hand, glared savagely into the girl's face.

"Who are you? and how dare you take my son's name upon you?"

"Why, mother, it's Lizzie Critchley. Don't you know her? I always said there was something up between her and Charlie," put in Hugh, who had now recovered his power of speech.

"It's Lizzie Campion, thank you—your brother's lawful wife. There's my lines, if you don't believe me." She wrenched herself away from Mrs. Campion, and thrust towards Hugh a dirty envelope which she took from her bosom.

It was a painful scene that followed. For some time Mrs. Campion was incapable of listening to reason. She poured forth a flood of indignant abuse, now directed against one, now against another, till she was fairly exhausted. Poor Lizzie, who had begun with such hysterical courage, completely broke down before long, and flung herself at the elder woman's feet, pleading for forgiveness and consideration. But she found no pity there, and only for Hugh's determination would have been forced back into the cold wet street.

"I tell you, mother, it can't be. Whoever is to blame in this matter, we must not turn a fellow-creature (not to say your son's wife) out on such a night as this."

Thus by degrees the angry woman was silenced;

and after a time she was even induced to listen to Lizzie's account of herself.

The lamp burned in the little room that night till long past midnight; for when the tale was told, and the two women had at length gone to rest, Hugh manfully set himself to work at his envelopes, determined that Mr. Selsby should not be disappointed.

CHAPTER IV.

LIZZIE'S STORY.

It was the old tale that many a foolish, self-willed girl has had to tell, though it was not so distressing a version of it as we have sometimes been compelled to mourn over.

Lizzie Critchley was the eldest of a large family; and as her father was merely a farm labourer, the child had been compelled to go to service at a very early age. But little Lizzie was fortunate in having for her first mistress a God-fearing and sensible woman, who not only permitted her to go to Sunday school, and to a class for instruction in reading and writing on a couple of evenings in the week, but who herself devoted no little time and thought to the training of the child. Mrs. Ripley was a simple, hard-working person,—not very well educated, not at all rich; but she always looked upon her “girl” as a member of the family, and especially in the case of this little one, whom she had taken a mere child from her father’s home, she felt a solemn responsibility laid upon her. She honestly tried, therefore, to make her not merely an efficient servant, but an intelligent Christian.

No cup of cold water given in Christ's name shall pass unrewarded,—Mrs. Ripley was quite sure of that; but as she had never been influenced by the prospect of such reward, she did not grumble, nor allow herself to be turned aside from her quiet walk in well-doing, when she met with ingratitude. For ungrateful Lizzie Critchley certainly was, though many a long year elapsed before she was willing to apply that word to her conduct. At the time she considered that she was to be commended, rather than otherwise, for briskly seizing the first opportunity to “better herself.” The opportunity occurred when, upon a sudden vacancy, Lizzie was offered the post of under-nurse at Beacham Manor. Mrs. Ripley was far from well; her large family was likely to become larger, when this unexpected offer came. She was unwilling that this girl, still in her teens, should be plunged into the temptation of a large and ill-regulated household, such as she knew Beacham Manor to be. But Lizzie considered “the old lady’s” advice stupid and interested; and accordingly poor Mrs. Ripley found herself left in the lurch at the shortest possible notice.

Lizzie Critchley had always been what is called “a good girl,”—that is to say, she was bright, punctual, and well-spoken. She had a thirst for knowledge, and a yet keener thirst for admiration; therefore she was most diligent in her school attendance, and was generally at the head of her class. Teachers and patrons smiled on her, patted her brown, curly head, and hoped she would, by God’s grace, grow up to be a sensible and pious woman. What they *hoped*, the vain girl herself had no doubt about. She had never missed her collect, had won many prizes, had been

confirmed in church, and now had obtained a "most respectable place." Lizzie Critchley was quite satisfied. She flattered herself that she knew her own value, and was not going to "demean herself" in any way.

But alas for resolutions that have no firmer foundation than vanity and self-esteem! With all her proud and successful lesson-saying, the girl had not learned to know her own heart,—had not learned to apply to herself the sacred words that had so often passed glibly from her lips; so when life's first real temptation came, she had no strength higher than her own on which to rely.

It was early in the last year of his apprenticeship that Charlie Campion had for the first time slept away from his mother's home. Some extensive repairs were being carried out at Beacham, and it was found inconvenient for the men and boys employed, among whom was Charlie, to go and return each day; therefore for a couple of months they put up at the village close by the Manor House, only returning to town from Saturday till Monday. At least there was an opportunity to do so, of which the steadier men availed themselves. For a week or two Charlie had come home regularly, and looking all the ruddier for the country air; and his mother, who had dreaded the thought of her impulsive boy being cast altogether among a number of men, many of whom she knew to be anything but desirable companions, was getting quite reconciled, as she watched the manifest improvement in the lad's health. But soon a change became apparent. The roses began to pale, and Charlie's merriment grew fitful, his temper uncertain. At last

he announced his intention of not coming home the following week : it was impossible, he said, to be in time for work on Monday morning if he slept at home the previous night ; so for a week or two he would not come home.

The reader will have guessed the end. One Sunday afternoon Mrs. Suffield, the lady of the Manor, walking in a somewhat unusual direction, was attracted by a cry. Turning into the side path whence the sound proceeded, she came on a perambulator in which her youngest child, just awoke from sleep, was crying lustily. In a moment the nurse was by its side ; but Mrs. Suffield's quick eyes had caught sight of a figure disappearing through the trees. Nothing was said at the time, but next morning Lizzie received a month's wages with a direction to leave the house that afternoon. That was Mrs. Suffield's style. She fancied herself a firm and excellent manager,—which meant that she let everything take its course till something glaring occurred ; then her action was prompt, merciless, and silent. She could not of course tolerate even the appearance of impropriety in so large an establishment,—when she saw it ! What was to become of the poor silly girl, thus summarily ejected, she never stayed to inquire. This was not humble Mrs. Ripley's style ; but then fashionable folk, with a dozen or more domestics, cannot perhaps be expected to take the same interest in individuals as did Mrs. Ripley in her one girl. That night poor Lizzie thankfully shared the bed of her hitherto despised successor in her old mistress's modest house.

Charlie, who had already begun to be known among his fellow-workmen as "Careless Champion," acted an

honourable if a somewhat hasty part: he proposed to Lizzie that they should get married at once. Thus it came about that within three weeks, and before either of them had realized the importance of the step they were thus hurried into, Charlie Campion and Lizzie Critchley found themselves man and wife. The question as to how he was to support a wife did not trouble the light-hearted apprentice much. He knew that other fellows married and got on somehow,—he supposed that he should do the same; and if Lizzie, somewhat more prudent than he, expressed any fears, they were readily silenced by Charlie's invariable argument—"What's the odds, so long as we are happy?"

And happy enough they were for a time. The girl was proud of her young and handsome husband; and the inconvenience and uneasiness of secrecy only served to cast a charm of romance over the whole affair. In Charlie's eyes it was still a "jolly lark." It simply never occurred to him that he had deceived his mother, united himself to one of whom he knew almost nothing, and hurried into responsibilities that he might not be able to meet. But gradually matters became more serious. The job at Beacham was complete, and Charlie had to return to Liverpool. What was to be done about Lizzie? She flatly refused to be left behind, and only agreed to be silent as to the marriage on Charlie promising that he would tell his mother, and "take her home," as soon as ever he was out of his apprenticeship. Good Mrs. Ripley, who had been kept in ignorance of the marriage, again stood a friend to Lizzie, and procured her lodgings in the house of an old friend, a certain Mrs. Pritchard, who

lived in Pine Apple Court. Of Mrs. Pritchard the reader shall hear more by-and-by. Then she gave the lone girl, as she thought her, such clothing as she required, lent her a few shillings for her journey, and sent her away with many prayers and much good advice.

It was, no doubt, a sign of grace in Lizzie that, as she turned from the good woman's door, she felt, for the first time in her life, thoroughly ashamed of herself,—sad, and sick at heart. Poor, silly girl! she felt in no humour to respond to her husband's gay remarks when she met him at the station, and thus something very like a quarrel marked their first trip together as man and wife. As for Charlie, he had succeeded in borrowing a few pounds from a fellow-workman, Bob Symington; and thus relieved from pressing difficulties, felt quite happy. In this state of mind Lizzie's doleful and tear-stained face had the effect of a wet blanket, and soon made him feel cold and cross. They parted at the station, and Lizzie made her way as best she could to Mrs. Pritchard's. She arrived tired, remorseful, and confused, and from the first the landlady "thought no great much of her."

It was a dreary time that followed, and within a year the heedless couple reaped the fruit of their folly and deception. After a time the young wife was unable to work, and in her trouble she found no consolation or support. Mrs. Pritchard began by thinking the girl uncommon lazy, but soon formed a much more decided opinion. Nor could Charlie do much. His wages were small, and he had already borrowed to the full extent of his credit. His mother accused him of

squandering his earnings, and that made him very cross, when he had not the courage to tell the truth. Charlie thought it was all very hard on him. Lizzie was sick and sulky; his mother disappointed and sometimes complaining; Mrs. Pritchard threatening, and evidently ready to forbid any further visits to her house. It was hard of course, as it should be; but the young man had not the dimmest suspicion that he had himself and nobody else to blame.

Thus those first months of wedded life that should be so full of sanctified joy, contentment, and thankfulness, were lived under a cloud—in an atmosphere of deception, deceit, and debt. Day after day young Campion, who was at bottom the softest-hearted fellow living, shrank from inflicting what he knew would be a grievous blow to his mother. He now perceived that he would have to confess, not only his marriage, but the deception he had so long carried on. But while he hesitated, the cup of Mrs. Pritchard's indignation overflowed. Thus it happened.

On the morning of the day with the events of which this story has been hitherto concerned, Charlie had, in the absence of Mrs. Pritchard, paid a long visit to his wife, and had promised not to let the day pass without disclosing to his mother the secret of their marriage. The reader knows that he did not do this, and also why he did not do it. In the evening Mrs. Pritchard, whose temper had been somewhat sharpened by a hard day's work, learned from an observant neighbour that Careless Campion had been in her house all the morning. She now roundly spoke out her mind to Lizzie, and such a scene ensued that the highly indignant girl refused to remain another night

under Mrs. Pritchard's roof. Accordingly she started off in the darkness and the rain, and arrived in the condition we have seen at Mrs. Champion's, where she fully expected to find her husband, and to be acknowledged, if not exactly welcomed, by her mother-in-law.

CHAPTER V.

A BAD FRIEND.

AND where was Charlie Campion that dark, wet night, while his wife was rushing along through the almost deserted streets? Where should he be but sitting comfortably in the bar-parlour of the Three Bells public-house. After leaving his home, the young man had wandered about for some time, and had almost made up his mind to go back and have it out with his mother, when the cowardly thought occurred to him that if he had just one glass he would be better able to "talk to the old lady." So Charlie, with his hands in his pockets, and trying hard to look and fancy himself a brave, careless fellow, strolled into the Three Bells. There, almost as a matter of course, he met Bob Symington, who had looked in on his way from work, just to see what was up. It did not take much—not more than an extra pint of beer—to make Charlie confess, and he soon waxed quite eloquent as he poured into the ear of his friend the story of his troubles. During the narration Bob indulged in nods and winks, and gave the "youngster" to understand that "him and his mates had seen more down there at Beacham than they chose to let on to." When, however, the marriage was mentioned, Bob looked amused

and incredulous. Then, seeing that Charlie was speaking the truth, he became suddenly grave, and gave utterance to a whistle so long protracted that before it was finished the weak young man had come to regard himself as "a big fool!"

"Well, Bob, now it's done, what would you have a fellow do?" he asked.

Now Bob Symington was one of those hardened fellows who, though seldom sober, always know well what they are about. He used to boast that no one ever saw him drunk; and it was perhaps true that no one had ever seen him absolutely incapable. Probably because Bob seldom drank at his own expense; and men don't care to treat a fellow who is already a disgrace and a bore. Symington had once been a good enough fellow, but, like most habitual tipplers, he had grown mean, knavish, and lying. He considered that Charlie Campion owed him four pounds, and that the interest he received in the form of countless "drinks" was not to be despised. He knew that while Charlie remained single he was good for any amount of "interest," and for the principal too, whenever it might be required. So the mean fellow, determined to hold on to his victim if possible, replied,—

"Well, Charlie, my boy, I think you're unfair weighted with both mother and wife on your shoulders; and if I was you, I'd just quietly hook it,—for a bit, you know."

"What would be the use of that?" asked Charlie, in a dubious tone. "I couldn't leave 'em altogether, could I?"

"Course not; honour bright," answered Bob, who

saw at once that he had gone too far. "But you could make a lot of money, and they'd learn to 'preciate you while you was away. . Come now, old fellow, let us have a pint, and I'll tell you a secret."

So Charlie ordered the beer, and over it Bob told him that a number of men were wanted at Warrington to run up a scaffold and some rough barricades in anticipation of an approaching royal visit. The time was very short, and men who could work long hours would be able to make a good thing of it. Bob himself was going down by the night train, with three or four friends, so as to be on the spot in the morning. Would Charlie join them?

This was just the sort of thing Charlie liked,—quick, hurried, rough work, and big wages. Of course he would go, only he must let his mother know what was up.

"Quite right," said Bob. "We'll look round that way going to the station." Not that he had an idea of doing anything of the sort, but he knew the character of the weak young man whom he twisted round his fingers so easily.

Time slipped by. Bob's friends dropped in one by one, and Charlie began to fear that he was scarcely in a fit condition to face his mother; so he thought he would content himself with leaving word at Mrs. Pritchard's. But the end of it was that the men kept on talking and drinking to the very last moment, and had to make a run for it to catch the night train. Charlie stumbled into a carriage, and fell asleep almost immediately; his last distinct thought was that he would be sure to write to his mother or to Lizzie in the morning.

CHAPTER VI.

SEEKING FOR NEWS.

MORE than a week passed by, but there came no news of Charlie. Inquiries made at Messrs. Bevans', the builders for whom Campion worked, brought to light the fact that he, with two or three others, had been dismissed for insubordination and irregularity the very day previous to that on which the reader first made the young man's acquaintance, as he sat on the edge of his mother's table, swinging his legs and trying to gather courage for a confession of his marriage.

Bob Symington had also been dismissed, and had also disappeared. It was natural to conclude that the men had gone to look for work elsewhere. But where had they gone to? and why had not Charlie written? Again and again did both mother and wife ask themselves the same question, and their common interest in the reply formed between them a real though unacknowledged bond of sympathy. After that first night there was no further talk of Lizzie leaving the house. She dropped into a sort of half-recognized position, and gave such little help as she could in household duties. Mrs. Campion accepted the girl as inevitable, and moved about as "in a sort of dream, from which she had neither the power nor the inclina-

tion to rouse herself. Little indeed was said, but the heart of each was full to the brim of bitterness, jealousy, and anxiety. They were ready to hate each other, these two women, on account of this man they both loved so dearly, and yet he apparently gave himself absolutely no trouble about either of them. Why had he not written, if it were but one line, to wife or to mother, to say that he was alive and safe?

Thus mother-in-law and daughter-in-law waited day after day. Neither liked to express anxiety or make complaint, lest perhaps the other might retort triumphantly, "It's little he seemed to care for *you* anyhow." But at last a word carelessly let fall by the elder woman kindled into flame the smouldering fire of Lizzie's jealous anxiety. Was it possible that this man, who had treated his mother with so little consideration, had now proved false to *her*? Had he left her now that she was just about to become a mother, and was consequently utterly unable to do anything for herself? It was a maddening thought, and had not previously occurred to her. Now it seemed the most likely thing in the world. That a son should have deceived, and finally abandoned, the mother who had toiled long and sore for him, had not seemed shocking to the vain girl. Was it not a proof of his love for herself? But now, she asked bitterly, could she trust the man who had acted so heedless, not to say so untruthful a part by his own mother?

Full of these fears and questions, Lizzie went forth on a bitterly cold winter afternoon determined not to return without tidings of her husband. She waited about the gate of Messrs. Bevans' till the men came streaming out from work; and then it required all her

determination to put up with the rude words and ruder looks that greeted her. Not that the men meant to be unkind, only they did not think it necessary to conceal their view of the relationship existing between Careless Campion and the girl who was making such eager inquiries as to his whereabouts. Now for the first time did Lizzie, burning under the light jests of these rough men, realize the shame of the false position in which she had placed herself. News of Charlie she could gain none, though from sundry joking remarks she gathered that some, at least, of the men knew more about him than they chose to tell. After wandering through the streets for some time, Lizzie found herself opposite the Three Bells, where she knew Charlie had been of late a too frequent visitor. It was possible the landlord would know something about the missing man; but remembering the treatment she had received from Messrs. Bevans' workmen, she hesitated to enter. Not that she was as unfamiliar with the interior of a public-house as every self-respecting, modest young woman ought to be; more than once had she gone into such places with Charlie, and had thought it rather a fine thing to do. But now she felt crestfallen and timid.

While thus hesitating, Lizzie was startled to hear herself addressed by that which was after all her proper name.

"Glad to see you, Mrs. Campion; you are just the person I was wishful to meet."

Lizzie looked round, and recognized the man she liked least in all the world—Bob Symington. He had evidently been drinking for some days, and was more visibly drunk than usual.

"Why do you call me that?" she asked sharply, and drawing herself back from the big hulking fellow, who seemed as if about to lay his hand familiarly on her shoulder.

"Well, and ain't I right?" he replied with a grin. "But I can tell you this has been a sore job for Charlie; my word, it was touch and go with him."

"What's happened? Oh, do tell me, Mr. Symington!" cried the young wife, forgetting in a moment all her jealous fears.

"It's a bad job," said Bob, shaking his head with what he believed to be most admirable sobriety. "But I say," he went on in a would-be considerate tone, "you don't look altogether on the square, so let's come in and have a glass of something—that is, if you've got the needful, for I'm cleared out."

"Oh yes, I've enough for that," answered Lizzie, looking hurriedly round, as if afraid she might be watched. Then the inviting glass door was pushed back, and swung quickly to again, as if fearful of letting any casual passer-by catch a glimpse of what was going on inside.

Bob Symington's tale was as simple as it was sad, but somehow he took a long time to tell it. More than once he was brought to an abrupt halt by the discovery that his glass was empty, and then Lizzie, eager to hear what had become of her husband, was obliged to have it refilled. Poor thing! she was beginning to feel heartily ashamed of herself; but now it was impossible to draw back. It was indeed a terrible time, and again and again the young wife vowed to herself that she would never be seen inside the door of a public-house again. Symington's

drunken familiarity frightened her, while his long-winded stupidity nearly exhausted her patience.

"You see, my dear, it was all well meant, and done with the best of good intentions. You see as how it was that your Charlie was a bit down in the mouth, and that 'cause the guvenor had cut up rough about his going on the spree the first week as he was out of his time. Well I felt for the young fellow, and says I to him, 'Cheer up, Charlie my man; I've heard a chap say as there is corn in Egypt—leastways in Warrington.'"

"Has he gone to Warrington then?" cried Lizzie impatiently.

"Now don't you be in too great a hurry, my dear," answered the fellow, playing cruelly with the poor creature's excitement. "It's dry work, this yarn-spinning, isn't it? Let's have a drop more liquor."

It was thus by slow degrees, and with many interruptions, that the tale was told. The job at Warrington had been successful and well paid. Charlie had worked like a black, and put in no end of over-time. All had gone well till the last day. By dint of hard, unremitting toil a huge temporary wooden structure had been run up. Then Symington, according to his own confession, had induced the young man "just to have a pint to keep him up." In the afternoon three or four of the carpenters had returned to put a few finishing touches to their work.

"Charlie got up on to the roof as nimble as a rabbit, just to put a nail in the flag-staff; and then somehow—it all happened like in a moment." And the sot, who knew well how much his own bungling had to answer for, hung his head guiltily as he gazed into his empty glass.

"What happened? What do you mean? Do tell me—tell me at once!" implored Lizzie in an agony of fear.

"Well, you see it was like this. He took hold of the rope that hung from the staff to steady himself, and then I see the fastening at t'other end giving way—at least it looked like as if it was giving—and I makes a run to catch it, and just then Charlie gives a shout that makes me look up sudden; and then I sees the poor fellow spinning through the air, and turning over till he fell on the grass right at my feet. It turns me faint-like to think of it," and again Bob looked at his empty glass.

"Where's he now?" cried Lizzie, not noticing the hint.

"Well, I's coming to that, if you'd let me," said the fellow sullenly. "When I sees him lie there so still, I says, 'Charlie, are you hurt?' And then, when he gave no answer, what does I do? Why, what could I do but holler to our mates? Then a chap comes along, and says I—"

"Where's my husband now, you drunken fool? Is he alive or dead?" almost shrieked the woman, catching Symington roughly by the arm.

For a moment the man looked fierce and defiant; then his whole expression changed, and he answered quite civilly,—

"We took him to the hospital; and that's where he lies now, nice and snug. Maybe you've the price of another glass about you?"

Lizzie flung some coppers on the counter, and then rushed into the street. It was pouring rain, but she never paused till she found herself at the station. She

had just money enough to pay for her ticket ; and as a train was about to start in a few minutes, she took her seat, wet and exhausted as she was. She never gave a thought to her mother-in-law, nor considered how useless it was to set out on her journey so late in the day.

It was dark and wet when the traveller arrived at her destination, and not without difficulty did she procure a lodging for the night. Next day she hoped to obtain admission to see her husband ; but when morning came, poor Lizzie Campion was unable to rise. A doctor was sent for, and later on in the day the sufferer was removed to a charitable institution. There Careless Campion's first child was born.

CHAPTER VII.

STUCK IN THE MUD.

FOUR years have passed since the night when we saw Charlie Campion stumbling into the train for Warrington. We left him full of good resolutions,—resolutions soon forgotten as the young man sank into a heavy though unrefreshing sleep. Charlie has made many good resolutions since, but they have shared the fate of the former ones: those made in the evening have been slept off in the night; those that morning witnessed—the most numerous—have generally been worked off or laughed off in the course of the day. That union, on which no blessing from above had been sought, has not proved a very happy one. As so often happens in the case of marriages hastily contracted between those who are still but boys and girls, neither understood the other; neither had the slightest idea of self-renunciation, or of the necessity of mutual forbearance; and thus both were disappointed. Lizzie, as we have seen, had always been what is called “a good girl;” but she had been, and long continued to be, far too conscious of the fact. Spiritually, she had now for several years been living on the capital she fancied herself to have stored up in by-gone and happier days. Married to a serious and sober husband,

her early training would have proved a blessing to her; the teaching imparted by earnest and God-fearing friends would have brought forth its natural fruit of piety and prudence; the head-knowledge, of which the girl had been so proud, would have sunk down into the heart and become a living, directing power in the life. But now, like so many others, Lizzie was living on the past. The inner consciousness or outspoken boast of what she *had been* had become in her eyes an ample apology for, if not a complete justification of, what she *actually was*.

As for Charlie, he tried hard to believe that he was just the same good-hearted, cheery, generous fellow people used to tell him he was. Few indeed, except Bob Symington, told him so now; and for that reason, though he did not know it, Charlie clung more closely than ever to this most undesirable acquaintance. He still kept the name of Careless Champion, and from time to time did his best to deserve it; but it was hard work. An uncomfortable home, four small children, old debts, bad habits, an uneasy conscience,—these form a heavy load. Bearing such along with him every day, a man may be reckless, but *careless* he can scarcely be,—not when sober, at any rate.

When sober! But, alas! Charlie Champion was now being borne out into the full current of that mad stream that whirls so many thousands down the great Niagara Falls of drunkenness and ruin! For a time his progress had not been rapid. It had always been Charlie's lazy habit to drift with the stream; but heretofore he had never got quite out of his depth. Just when people prophesied the worst for him, and

shook their heads and began to pity his poor wife and family, Charlie had always floated, without any effort of his own, into the back current, and had come to shore in safety. But now the rash venturer on troubled and dangerous waters seemed altogether to have lost his footing. Ignorant of his own danger, or blindly confident in his power to "stop up" whenever he chose, he made no effort to save himself. It was happening to Charlie Campion, as it has happened to so many others,—domestic annoyances and discomforts were driving him to drink; and drink, in its turn, was daily lessening his power either to remedy the discomforts or to endure the annoyances.

Old Mrs. Campion had refused to have anything to say to her son when he returned from Warrington with his wife and child in a state of absolute pauperism. Nor would the travellers have found it easy to procure a lodging had it not been for the kindness of Mrs. Pritchard, who let them have an empty back room, at first for nothing, and afterwards at a very moderate rent. In this room they now lived with their four babies. It was a dingy, comfortless place, with no furniture except what was absolutely necessary. During that four years Charlie had *intended* to do great things, and in imagination he had made enough chairs and tables to stock a house,—not to mention one small room.

While thus stuck fast at the bottom of the hill, Careless Campion had the mortification to see nearly everybody else getting on. Willie was still a mere day-labourer, silent, toiling, persevering. But as his children grew up healthy and helpful, a greater air of ease and comfort crept into the house. As for

Hugh, he was in clover,—so at least he thought himself. Mr. Selsby, after using the poor fellow's services with but scant and infrequent payment, had marched upstairs one afternoon and proposed to Mrs. Campion that her son should come into his office. Hugh, who was beginning to feel the bitterness of a northern winter, gladly closed with the offer. He was to have an increase of five shillings a week on his former wages; but he knew he would have to work hard for it. The great consideration was that he would now be on the spot, close to his mother, able to come up to his meals, and sure of his evenings, if not absolutely to himself—for Mr. Selsby frequently left rather more work "just to be finished up" than was agreeable or fair—at least to be spent in quiet and warmth.

Charlie Campion was too good-natured a fellow at heart to be envious of his brothers, yet, as he said, "it was bound to rile him a bit" when he observed the difference between their position and his own. But the great shock of all had come lately, when he became conscious of the transformation that was passing over the house in which he lived. It had long been a secret source of comfort that Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard often seemed but little, if anything, better off than himself. When he took the back room it was not a bit gloomier or dirtier than the rest of the house, nor till lately had its furniture been much scantier or more rickety; but now all this was changing. Mr. Pritchard held up his head like one who owes no man anything; his wife had grown tidy and prosperous-looking; his numerous children, clean and well-dressed. The old furniture was gradually being replaced; and

without any fuss or noise, it seemed as if some mysterious spirit had passed through the house, transforming all things by the touch of its magic wand.

But how all this had been brought about must be told in another chapter. Nor shall we forget our promise to introduce the reader to Mrs. Pritchard.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. PRITCHARD.

MRS. PRITCHARD was a remarkable woman ; so everybody who knew her acknowledged, though at the same time she was certainly not much to look at. A poor, thin, tired face; faded yellow hair, and not much of it; a red nose, and rather weak eyes ; a slight, wasted figure ; a sharp voice ; and a draggled gown,—that made up Mrs. Pritchard. A commonplace woman enough, especially in places where women are hard worked and badly fed. Yet still she was a person of importance among her neighbours. First of all, she was the mother of a large family ; and though several of its members were scattered far abroad, and several were settled in homes of their own, there were still enough remaining to make a good show and bring in a good income. That worn-out, untidy woman could boast, and *did* boast not a little, of four as steady, respectable young fellows—her sons—as you would wish to see. How they came so spruce and tidy of a Sunday morning out of that dirty and apparently ill-regulated home, might well surprise you. Then again Mr. Pritchard was a man highly respected. A chair-maker by trade, he had worked under the same employers for over thirty years. He was a slow man,

no doubt—slow in mind and slow in movement—but painstaking, punctual, and polite. Were it not for a periodic outbreak of the wretched drink-madness, which converted his slowness into stupidity, no more reliable or satisfactory workman could be found in his trade. We have said that Mr. Pritchard was respected; and so he was, despite his one great failing. For though an occasional drunkard, he was never a brawler or a wife-beater. This man was never seen inside a public-house; and when his fits were at the worst, he was never seen at all. Then, after two or three days' absence from work, he would reappear, more slow and silent than usual. But after all, though he passed for a good neighbour and a man of sound judgment, Mr. Pritchard was secondary to his wife. *She* was the ruling spirit, not only in her house, but among a wide circle of acquaintances. Why, it would be hard to say, except because she was one of those capable people who are born to guide and influence others, whether for good or ill. In time of sickness or trouble of any sort the neighbours turned instinctively to Mrs. Pritchard. Nor did they find her wanting: she was prompt, knowing, and kind. A woman of some education and wide experience, she did what she could, and said what she could, for almost everybody. She had assisted or been present at the birth of more than half the population of her street, and was in matters babyish an authority that even the doctor did not despise. But popularity has its snares, and poor Mrs. Pritchard had become thoroughly entangled before she was conscious of any danger. The readily-offered glass of gin, with which her services by day or night were acknowledged, was at first accepted in a spirit of

neighbourliness. It next came to be relished and to be looked for. Finally, it grew to be a supposed necessity. Poor Mrs. Pritchard! she was no doubt a useful member of the society in which she lived; nor were there wanting in her good and precious qualities. What an example, what a help to others, might not such a woman have been! But now it seemed as though all her kind deeds and good inclinations were neutralized by her bad habits. The more people liked and valued her, the less were they repelled by a constant exhibition of that slovenliness and impaired health which are the sure consequences of habitual tippling.

Things had long continued thus when that gradual change commenced which, as it developed, caused so much uneasiness to Careless Campion. Mrs. Pritchard had always entertained a kindly feeling towards her ne'er-do-weel lodgers. She used to say that old Mrs. Ripley, Lizzie's first mistress, "had been a good friend to her, and she was not going to forget it." And she was as good as her word. More than once, when Charlie had been out of work or drinking, his poor silly wife and the children had been indebted to their landlady for daily bread,—not to speak of the arrears of rent being allowed to accumulate week after week. Charlie had indeed come to take all this as a matter of course.

"What's the odds about a couple of shillings of rent and a loaf of bread?" he used to say when his wife pressed upon him that there must be some limit to Mrs. Pritchard's generosity. "Doesn't mother Pritchard know rightly I'd do as much for her if it lay in my power?"

"But it's not likely to lie in your power whilst you carry on as you do," Lizzie would retort, truthfully but not wisely. And so the dreary and profitless round of mutual accusation and recrimination would recommence, and Charlie would leave the room, complaining that "it was mighty hard on a chap to have every one down on him." Then when the Three Bells was closed, he would return singing gaily, "What's the odds, so long as we are happy?" Whether the woman who sat waiting for him was happy or not, was not a point that troubled him.

Charlie—we are glad to have it to say of him—was generally good-tempered. Whether he came home less than half sober or more than half drunk, he was never a brute and seldom a bully. He never kicked his wife, and was always ready in the morning to admit that he had been to blame. But as the reform in Mrs. Pritchard's establishment progressed, the young carpenter began to grow quite savage. The piece of bright red-patterned carpet in the best parlour roused him as though he had been an excitable bull; he snorted and shied at the sight of it. The new cane chairs were his deadliest foes,—not that they were new at all, being simply the old broken ones resealed by Mr. Pritchard after working hours, and polished up by a friendly cabinet-maker who had entered the reform conspiracy. But Charlie's chief enemy was the obtrusive cocoa-nut mat at the doorway. There it was always waiting for him, no matter at what hour he came in. It was a silent protest against irregularity and dirt; a witness, not to be overlooked or overstepped, of progress towards cleanliness, order, and self-respect. It certainly saved the

hall and stairs ; for Charlie, when he came in, would rub his feet with a vengeance, as if he would gladly rub the mat to pieces, muttering all the while complaints against people becoming "so beastly genteel, and setting up to be better than other folk." In the morning Mrs. Pritchard often found her much-enduring mat kicked to the other end of the little hall ; then she would smile and say to herself,—

"Never mind. Poor young fellow ! perhaps we'll fetch him round yet. Example is better than preaching, say I ; though preaching's not a bad thing neither, as I've good reason to know."

Then Mrs. Pritchard, standing on her doorstep, would shake the mat with a will. And as the clouds of dust, that Careless Champion's feet had left there the night before in the form of mud, rose up, you might hear the woman singing,—supposing the dust didn't frighten you away,—

"O happy day ! O happy day !"

CHAPTER IX.

PATCHING OLD CLOTHES.

THE busiest part of Mrs. Pritchard's day was over. Her husband and the big boys were gone back to work ; the smaller children had been sent off to afternoon school ; everything had been washed and tidied up after dinner, and so Mrs. Pritchard had a little time on her hands. What should she do ? Go out and stand on the doorstep, just to get a breath of air and see what was going on ? That was what a good many women did in Pine Apple Court. It was what Mrs. Pritchard had often done in days gone by. And if there should chance to be a bit of a row between some of the neighbours, what was to hinder her giving an opinion on the merits of the case ? Such neighbourly disagreements were not uncommon in the court ; and Mrs. Pritchard, being a person of importance, was apt to be appealed to as umpire. Then again she had sometimes dropped in to help a friend with a bit of washing, or been called to advise over a sick baby. Thus many an afternoon had slipped away. Mending had been left undone, the room untidied ; and more than once the men had been coming in to tea, when Mrs. Pritchard hurried into her house to find the kettle clean boiled away and the fire out.

But somehow of late Mrs. Pritchard had found herself too busy at home for afternoon visiting, though she still found time for any act of real kindness or neighbourliness which she might be asked to undertake. This afternoon, however, there was no interruption, and so, after looking round the room to see that all was straight, she slipped upstairs with a dish of broken victuals—meat and bread and potatoes—which she had laid aside after dinner. In a short time she returned and sat down, with a somewhat downcast expression, to mend a very torn and threadbare little garment. Was it the almost hopeless condition of the poor worn frock that made Mrs. Pritchard look so grave? She had left the room with a bright and smiling face; but now her lips were tightly pressed and her brow contracted, as she plied her needle with a sort of fierce determination. After a time, however, she seemed to recover herself; and when at length she spread out the garment on the table, adorned with a substantial but homely patch, her good humour seemed quite restored.

“Well, I believe there’s little so bad as to be past mending,” she said out loud; adding, after a pause, “We must try to patch ’em all up somehow.”

Then Mrs. Pritchard began to think, and any one at whom she might look up suddenly would see that after a time her eyes were full of tears. That was just what the Rev. John Crawford saw when, after getting no answer to his repeated knock, he ventured to look into the room and startled Mrs. Pritchard from her reverie.

“I hope I’m not intruding, Mrs. Pritchard,” said the clergyman softly, and still hesitating at the door;

for as the woman started up he noticed a tear, shaken from its place by her sudden movement, coursing down her thin cheek.

"Oh no, sir, not in the least; I'm always glad to see you, and most of all this afternoon!" Mrs. Pritchard spoke as if she meant it.

"Is there anything wrong with you?" asked Mr. Crawford, reassured by her evident sincerity of manner.

"No, sir; there's nothing wrong. We're all well and hearty,—thank God for it."

She looked so surprised at the question that Mr. Crawford felt bound to explain.

"I thought perhaps you were ill, or tired. I knocked twice without receiving an answer, and when I came in you were—"

"I was thinking about that patch, and about what you said the other night at the meeting,—that nothing is too hard for the Lord," interrupted Mrs. Pritchard, smiling.

"How's that?" asked Mr. Crawford, drawing a chair, and anxious to hear what might be the connection between his last Wednesday evening's text and the little patched garment that still lay upon the table.

"Well, you see, sir, ever since the mission time I've been wishful to do some little thing for the Saviour, and to guide some poor fellow-sinner into the right way. So this afternoon I thought I'd just go up and say a word to my lodger. But somehow it's not so easy; and she didn't seem pleased. Then I offered to do a bit of sewing for her; but as she didn't invite me to stop, I brought it down here. I was put out at

first, and thought the old thing wasn't worth the trouble. Then I just said to myself that I'd try what I could do; and now I think it looks quite smart!"

The clergyman looked at the frock. It didn't come up to his idea of "smart," so he said smiling,—

"I'm sure it is much better than it was."

"So you'd say if you had seen it an hour ago," answered Mrs. Pritchard triumphantly, forgetting that Mr. Crawford had already said so without having seen the frock in its previous state. "Then," she continued, "I began to think if something couldn't be done to patch up poor Lizzie and the children anyhow. And I remembered what you said about nothing being too hard for the Lord; and so I says to myself, 'If you could patch up that old thing to make it serve a turn, who can say what the Lord may do yet for those poor silly things upstairs?' And there's good sound stuff in both of them too, sir, only it sadly wants washing."

"Thank you, Mrs. Pritchard, thank you," cried the clergyman, in a tremulous voice; "you've made a better application of my sermon than I had the grace to make myself. It's just about those very lodgers that I have specially come to talk to you to-day."

"Isn't that strange now? It seems quite providential like, doesn't it, sir?"

Then Mr. Crawford told a sad and shameful story,—for shameful it was that any strong young man should have been brought thus low by the slavery of vicious habits. The night before a stranger had called on him to ask for assistance. He represented

himself as a carpenter out of work ; he said that he and his family were nigh starving, and that he had been brought to this condition in consequence of long protracted sickness. He added that he had now the offer of a job, only his tools were all in pawn. Would the clergyman assist him to get them out ? The man, said Mr. Crawford, was half drunk at the time, and he was afraid he had spoken somewhat too harshly to him. He had sent the suppliant away unrelieved ; but had taken his name and address, promising to call upon him next day. The carpenter had indeed said he didn't want any parsons coming about his place ; but that had only made Mr. Crawford more determined to find out what truth, if any, there was in the tale.

Mrs. Pritchard was surprised to find that Campion had sunk so low as this. She had indeed wondered how, being out of work, he had provided himself with such little money as he seemed to have during the last few weeks ; but now it was plain enough. Having briefly explained to the clergyman her connection with the Campions, she proposed that they should go upstairs and see how Lizzie was actually circumstanced.

"I know you won't mind if she's a bit short at first," said Mrs. Pritchard, looking round as they ascended the stairs. Mr. Crawford apparently detected some hidden meaning in her words, for he laughed and said,—

"Oh, not at all ; those are the sort of people I get to be sworn friends with by-and-by !"

Mrs. Pritchard knocked at the door, and a sharp voice replied,—

"Who's that?"

"It's me; I've brought the frock for wee Billy."

"You may come in," was the response.

So Mrs. Pritchard opened the door, and the clergyman walked in.

CHAPTER X.

A SILENT PREACHER.

MR. CRAWFORD found himself standing on the dirty floor of an almost empty room. His accustomed eye took in the whole situation at once, and he felt embarrassed as he mentally asked himself where he was to sit down. You can't make yourself at home, or get on satisfactorily with your business, till you are invited to sit down; and an invitation to be seated comes awkwardly when there is nothing suitable to be sat upon within sight. This was what the clergyman saw: a substantial deal table, littered over with unwashed cups and plates; a few struggling embers in the grate, which a little girl was trying to blow into a flame; above her, on the mantle-shelf, a paraffin lamp, with broken and blackened chimney,—a gin bottle, and a glass. Sitting near the table, and apparently doing nothing, was a slovenly and listless woman; while close to his feet, and supporting its tottering steps by the aid of a rough three-legged stool, appeared a round-faced little mortal about a year and a half or two years old. A sheet pinned up across the corner doubtless concealed a bed. But nothing else was visible save a broken-backed chair, in the hollow of which was a pool of soapsuds.

Evidently visitors were not expected here, and Mr. Crawford felt himself an intruder.

"Thank you, Mrs. Pritchard; you may leave it down," said the woman, without looking round.

"I've brought our minister to see you," remarked Mrs. Pritchard, by way of introducing the stranger. Then, laying the dress on a corner of the table, the good woman slipped from the room.

Lizzie Campion started up with a hasty exclamation; but seeing Mr. Crawford standing there hat in hand, a flash of her old good manners came back to her. She dropped a somewhat unsteady courtesy, and waited for her visitor to speak.

"I promised your husband to come and see you. He said you were in great distress."

"Ay, more than he knows or will care about," she answered bitterly. "But won't you sit down?" she added, offering the chair on which she had been sitting, and hastily wiping the remaining one for her own use.

Mr. Crawford sighed to himself as he sat down. It was evident, from her movements, that Mrs. Campion was not quite sober. At this moment the young gentleman with the stool, having recovered from his first surprise, commenced to bawl lustily, and beat a retreat, stool and all, under the table.

"Don't be angry with the little man; he's not used to strangers," said the clergyman in a kindly tone, and noticing the sudden flush of anger in the woman's excited face.

Lizzie looked for a moment into the speaker's face, as if surprised at hearing herself addressed in so soft

a voice ; then she took the frightened child on her knee and hushed it.

"There, there, Billy boy ; it's not your father this time. Don't be frightened !"

"He called on me last night and asked for help to get his tools out of pawn. But I knew it would have been throwing away money to give him anything just then," explained Mr. Crawford.

"So he's taken to begging, has he ? Well, it wasn't before we had need of it ;" and the poor thing looked round the desolate room with a shudder.

"He said your baby was very sick," Mr. Crawford went on.

"Oh, the baby is well enough now !" said Lizzie in the same hard, unnatural tone. Her eyes were fixed on the pinned-up curtain ; but she did not stir.

"Come, I'm glad of that !" exclaimed the clergyman cheerfully. "Asleep, I suppose ?" and his eyes followed the direction of the mother's.

Then the girl, who had succeeded in blowing the fire into a flame, rose up, and faced him with sooty, tear-stained countenance.

"Please, sir, aunt means as baby is gone to heaven."

"He's sleeping rightly, anyhow," moaned the woman, hiding her face in her hands.

Mr. Crawford rose hastily and drew back the sheet. There, in the midst of the unmade bed, lay an infant of some six months old. It might have been asleep, and the clergyman could not believe that the little heart had ceased to beat for ever till he stooped down and touched the body. He looked round. The mother now stood by his side, the big tears coursing down her cheeks.

"He was a beautiful child, sir, and healthy enough when he was born, too. But it's happy for him that he has been taken away."

The woman's grief, finding vent in tears, seemed quite to have sobered her. A few words of simple prayer were offered by the bedside, and then she was easily led on to pour out the sad tale of her trials and temptations. Things beginning badly, had gone from bad to worse. The first child, born in the Union at Warrington, had not long survived; the second had soon followed it; and now the baby lay dead in that miserable room, while the father had been wandering the streets "looking for work" since early morning.

"We can't be no worse than we are now, anyhow," said the poor woman in a desperate tone.

"Well, then, let us trust the time has come for beginning to be better," answered Mr. Crawford cheerfully.

Lizzie complained bitterly of the treatment they had received from old Mrs. Campion.

"When that sweet angel was born," she said, glancing towards the bed, "I might have lain there and died if it hadn't been for William's wife and Mrs. Pritchard. She's a hard-natured, bad old woman, so she is! I wish she may never want a friend to stand by herself in her time of need."

Lizzie spoke so fiercely that you might well think she meant to say *ever* instead of *never*. But Mr. Crawford chose to take her words literally, and said gravely,—

"Well, I'm glad to hear you say you don't bear malice; but it's a harsh thing to say of any one that they are hard-natured and bad."

"I just wish you knew her then," retorted Lizzie.

"I mean to go and see her by-and-by," replied the clergyman quietly. "But who is this little girl who told us baby was gone to heaven? She's too old to be yours."

"Oh, that's wee Jane, William Campion's eldest. They sent her over when they heard the child was so bad with bronchitis; and a right good lassie she is too."

Lizzie Campion added these last words tenderly, as there rose before her the memory of a night mostly spent in quarrelling with her husband, while patient, womanly little Jane nursed the baby-sufferer during the last hours of his short life.

Half an hour passed, during which Mr. Crawford was enabled to show many things to Lizzie Campion in a light very different from that in which she had previously regarded them. He spoke kindly and forbearingly, as one who considers himself, lest he also be tempted, but he spoke bravely and firmly.

"He taught her all the mercy, for he showed her all the sin." Lizzie had, as we have seen, been well and carefully brought up, and to hear again the old familiar words of gospel truth reminded her of earlier and happier days. What a great gulf seemed to separate her from that time when, in her school-girl pride, she had glibly rattled off the very texts that Mr. Crawford now repeated so slowly and solemnly! Yet, as she listened, the words gradually acquired a meaning and a power such as they had never possessed for her before. There was a long silence after Lizzie had, quite unconsciously, finished out loud a verse, the beginning of which the clergyman had quoted.

"You seem to have been well instructed. That is a blessing for which you cannot be too thankful."

"I had a good mistress, sir; one as was like a mother to me." Lizzie Campion spoke eagerly, and her eyes were now full of tears.

"Where was that?" asked Mr. Crawford, much interested.

"At Beacham in Cheshire. I didn't belong to that parish, but Mrs. Ripley took me when I was quite a child to—"

"Mrs. Ripley! Why, I know her well," cried the clergyman. "I was curate of Beacham for a short time before I came here. She was one of the best Christian women I ever met. She died shortly after I left the parish. And do you know I think I've heard her speak of you. What was your name before you were married?"

"Critchley—Lizzie Critchley."

"Yes; that's it. I remember it all now. How interested she was in you; and how you deceived—"

"Yes, say it out; I did deceive her," sobbed Lizzie. "And to think she's dead without ever having forgiven me!"

"Mrs. Ripley was too true a Christian to have lived or died unforgiving to anybody," said Mr. Crawford. "She always spoke of you with tenderness; indeed, she told me the whole story, hoping I might meet you some time in Liverpool. I didn't think it likely at the time, but you see how God brings things about."

The mention of Mrs. Ripley's name had been one of those so-called chances that so often happen. Every day people meet, fancying themselves complete strangers. Without a thought in common, they "make conversa-

tion" for, say, ten or fifteen minutes, and then are quite ready to part, thinking they have done their duty. But at the last a casual word is dropped, the name of a place or of a person is mentioned, and in a moment the barrier is broken down. The circles of the two lives have touched or cut each other, and all is now eagerness and sympathy. A dozen questions are asked, and scarce any time is allowed for replies. The strangers become acquaintances, almost friends. Thus it was with Mr. Crawford and Lizzie; and it would be hard to say how long they would have gone on talking about Beacham and the Beacham folk, had not a sudden diversion been created by the noisy entrance of Careless Campion.

"Halloa!" cried Charlie, observing a stranger, but then suddenly checking himself as he recognized Mr. Crawford.

"You see I have kept my appointment. I'm sorry to find you in trouble," said the clergyman rising.

"Right you are, sir; but don't trouble to move," responded Charlie, who seemed in boisterous spirits. "You see the missis has been a wee bit put out about the baby, and trade's terrible dull. But what's the odds? It'll be all right enough by-and-by. Only I thought as you might help a fellow in a pinch, you know."

"I'm willing enough to help you, my friend, if only you'll let me," said the clergyman gravely. "But no one can help a man who won't help himself."

"Come, that's what I call preaching. But how's a poor fellow to do without tools?" remonstrated Charlie in an impudently familiar tone.

Lizzie now fired up angrily. "You'd better go and

buy a coffin for your child, and not stand there giving impudence," she cried.

"What do you mean?" asked the man, instantly dropping the light chaffing tone in which he had hitherto spoken.

"Look here," said Mr. Crawford sternly, as he drew back the sheet and showed the little figure that was now laid out calm and cold on the bed. "I'm a father myself, and know what you *ought* to feel."

"Dead!" almost shrieked the man, seizing up the child in his arms, and carrying it to the window. "This is *your* doing, you heartless thing!" he continued, turning savagely on his wife.

"Ay, it becomes you to talk!" she retorted bitterly,—“you, who left me here many's the night without food or fire, with the child shivering in my arms!”

"And it's a nice place I've got to come home to—"

"Hush! hush!" cried Mr. Crawford; "don't quarrel over your child's dead body. You both know well what has caused all this trouble—*drink*! Now, in God's name, put it away from you! If you don't like my preaching, *Campion*, look at your own child in your arms; let it plead with you! Remember, you will have to answer for its little life at God's judgment-bar. Look at your wife! she is but little more than a girl. Look at yourself! you are a young man still, with all the world before you. You have a good trade and a strong arm; yet here you are to-day a miserable creature, your wife in rags, your child dead in your arms, ashamed of yourself,—ashamed to look me in the face; afraid to even think of God. Shame, man! shame!"

Mr. Crawford was not in the habit of speaking with such energy, and now paused for breath, half dreading the consequences of his speech. But if he was not in the habit of uttering them, Charlie Campion was certainly not in the habit of hearing such words. Without attempting any reply, he crept softly to the bed, laid down the child gently as if it were sleeping, then dropping into the vacant chair beside the table, and hiding his head between his outstretched arms, sobbed aloud.

CHAPTER XI.

“AS HARD AS A PIECE OF THE NETHER MILLSTONE.”

MR. CRAWFORD fulfilled his promise, and called on old Mrs. Champion that same afternoon. He ascended the long flights of stairs with a light and rapid step, for he felt cheered in spirit and confident of success. He believed that he had been enabled to make a real impression on both Charlie and his wife; and he trusted that the scene of the morning, painful though it was at the time, would prove the introduction to a happier and better future. He had a tale to tell of sorrow, misfortune, and repentance, such as he felt sure would touch a mother's heart; and so it was without the slightest misgiving that he tapped with his umbrella handle at Mrs. Champion's door. A voice bade him enter, and he found himself standing on the threshold of one of the cleanest and tidiest rooms he had ever seen.

Mrs. Champion has aged considerably since first she was introduced to the reader. Her hair is no longer black, with here and there a streak of white; it is almost white now, with only some lingering traces of black. As she rises to salute the stranger, her tall figure is more stiff than of yore, but her keen glance has lost none of its penetrating power. The face is

still thin and stern, though outwardly there are increased signs of comfort. The old, well-scoured deal table remains in its place; but beneath it is a square of bright new carpet, while most of the old furniture has been replaced by better and more substantial articles. There is no doubt an air of prosperity about the room; but somehow the stern sadness of the mistress seems reflected in the stiff arrangement and faultless tidiness of everything around her. It is evident that not as yet has Mrs. Campion found rest for her soul.

The clergyman's heart suddenly misgave him as he stood a moment contemplating the scene before him. How different was this room from that in which he had spent the greater part of the morning! Yet he felt instinctively that there was something wanting, something not to be found *here* which he trusted had at least been left *there*—some grace of humility and prayerfulness. It was therefore with some hesitation that he commenced to tell his tale.

He warmed as he proceeded, but Mrs. Campion grew more cold.

"It's a good thing the child is gone. I believe there is only one left now, poor thing!"

"I hope the child's death may be made the instrument of blessing; I trust it will be," said Mr. Crawford gently. "But any one who has had children of their own must feel for parents at such a time."

He looked straight into those dark eyes with a yearning expression, hoping to detect some sign of feeling there. Then, after waiting a few moments in vain, he said abruptly,—

"Mrs. Campion, don't you think you ought to go

and see your son's wife? She is in trouble, and they would both be glad to see you."

Mrs. Campion answered quietly, "We all have our troubles in life, sir, and must all learn to bear them, especially those who bring them on themselves."

"But are not those the people who need help the most?" he pleaded. "Is it not easier to bear the trouble God sends us in the way of his providence, than that which we know we have brought on ourselves by our sin or folly?"

"I know nothing of providence, but I know I had to bear my trouble *alone*. I know that I slaved and toiled year after year for that boy. I wronged his brothers for his sake. And then he deceived me and left me. Now he must lie on his bed as he has made it."

"But I think Charlie needs your help just now more than you need his. You seem pretty comfortable, Mrs. Campion."

"If I am, it's no thanks to him, but to the boy that I neglected for his sake. He's a good son, is Hugh, though I wasn't always a good or kind mother to him." There was a tone of tenderness in the last words; and indeed Mrs. Campion was evidently pleased by the admiring looks Mr. Crawford was casting round her tidy room.

"Then Hugh has not forsaken or neglected you in your old age, although it seems he might cast it in your teeth that you hadn't treated him as well as you did this prodigal in days gone by."

Mrs. Campion had wit enough to perceive the snare into which she had fallen, but not grace enough to acknowledge that she was being condemned out of

her own mouth. Like most people who are beaten by conscience as well as by argument, she felt herself getting hot and angry.

"I don't want to argue with you, sir," she said, "and I don't want to be disrespectful to you; but if you come here to ask me to visit my son Charlie and his wife, I must tell you at once it's waste of time, for that is a thing I won't do till my dying day."

She rose from her chair, leaning on a stick. The clergyman took the hint, and rose too.

"That's a rash thing to say, Mrs. Campion," he said gently, holding out his hand; "though I'm sure you have had your troubles and disappointments." He looked again into her worn and sorrowful face, and added, "Perhaps you'd like me to come and see you sometimes; you must be lonely sitting here all day?"

"I'll be always glad to see you, sir," answered the woman, who was already sorry for the harshness with which she had dismissed her visitor. "But you mustn't ask me to do that I've vowed I won't do."

"Hush!" said the clergyman, raising his hand. "Foolish vows are often bitterly repented; and you may rely on it that I will never *ask* you to pay that visit again. Now, good-bye."

He was gone; and then Mrs. Campion sat down and gazed into the fire, as we have seen her do before. Her thoughts went back to the long-past days of her joyous youth; then they lingered awhile over the hard years when her boys were yet small and helpless; and then she recalled, for the hundredth time, that afternoon when we first saw Charlie,—a good-hearted, careless lad, sitting across the corner of the old deal table. The mother looked up, as if expecting

to see him there. Then she let her eyes wander slowly round the room. Things were very different from what they had been on that day when Charlie had so angrily flung himself out of the room. All was comfort and order ; but there was no comfort in the mother's heart. Charlie had never since been up the long flights of stairs, and his mother had seldom been down them. She had seen her son once or twice in the streets, but she had never spoken to him. Perhaps it was growing infirmity, perhaps it was the fear of such chance meetings, that made Mrs. Campion more and more inclined to stay at home.

Hugh was the same hard-working, patient fellow as of yore. He never seemed to weary, and his mother would sit and look at him with wonder and respect, though, alas! with little affection. She could not forget that she had treated Hugh badly in his childhood, and she fancied, quite wrongly, that he brooded over the fact. Mr. Crawford had no idea how tender was the point that he had struck.

Then, as the afternoon crept on, and the fire sank low, the old questions as to the meaning of life, and what might be after life, came up. The shadows deepened, but there was no "light at evening,"—no ray of faith or of hope to cheer the lonely dreamer.

As had happened once before, when Hugh came in, he found the fire black out, and his mother fast asleep and very cold.

CHAPTER XII.

HOPING FOR BRIGHTER DAYS.

WHEN good Mr. Crawford got home that evening his spirits were considerably damped. After leaving Mrs. Campion, he had gone to Messrs. Bevans' to ask that Careless Campion might be taken back and given just one more trial. Old Mr. Bevan had smiled at what he deemed the simplicity and softness of the clergyman, and then he had grown a little angry at his persistence.

"My dear sir, I have given the fellow twenty 'one more trials,' and I'm not going to try my temper or lose my time with him any more. I wouldn't advise you to do so either."

So the old gentleman had said, rising briskly ; and for the second time that afternoon Mr. Crawford had found himself practically invited to withdraw.

It was all very disheartening, and for more than an hour the clergyman sat over the fire trying to think what could be done by him towards giving the repentant prodigal another chance of "picking himself up." At length an idea occurred to him, and he wondered he had not thought of it sooner. He had some slight knowledge of a builder named Bateman, under whom Mrs. Pritchard's fourth son, Ben, was

employed as an apprentice to the plumbing. Why should he not ask him to give Campion a trial? Bateman was not indeed in a large way of business, and too much of his work was of the "jerry" class; but he had favourably impressed Mr. Crawford, in the one interview they had had, as a kindly and Christian-spirited man.

No sooner said than done. The clergyman wrote a hurried note in time for that night's post, and backed up his application by a visit early next morning. Bateman, who was in want of a man, was right glad to do a kindly turn, and to fill a vacant place at the same time. Mr. Crawford went in person to get the tools out of pledge. And after the dinner hour, that very day, Charlie was to be seen hard at work on a row of new houses that Mr. Bateman was apparently running up with the view of seeing how fast and cheaply human habitations could be brought into existence.

Thus things went on pretty well for a couple of weeks. Charlie indeed put off from day to day taking the pledge,—a thing that he had promised Mr. Crawford he would do at once; but till he got his first pay, he was at least a sadder and soberer if not a wiser man than of yore. The clergyman was disappointed. He found it impossible to make any lasting impression on this man's light heart and affected carelessness. Even a few years of heedless selfishness and reckless vice had seared the young man's conscience as with a hot iron, and destroyed his self-respect. Truth and falsehood seemed to come with equal readiness to his glib tongue; and of the sacred value of time, whether his own or his master's,

he had absolutely no idea. But though Campion had not exactly turned over a new leaf, he was sincerely anxious not to fall back into the "slough of despond" from which he had been rescued. In his efforts to keep himself straight he found an ally in one whose existence he had hitherto been scarcely aware of—little Ben Pritchard. Ben was a wise, old-fashioned little chap, with a veritable man's head on boy's shoulders,—a striking contrast to Charlie, who was in so many respects nothing more than a grown-up child. Between these two a strong attachment sprang up; and the love, mingled with respect, that the careless young carpenter felt for the boy was the means of keeping him out of many a scrape.

It all resulted from an accident that happened about a week after Charlie had been taken on at Bateman's. He was working in the basement of one of the new houses, when he was startled by a sudden cry of pain. Rushing into the kitchen, he found that poor Ben had spilt over his foot the greater part of a quantity of lead which he had been sent there to melt. Charlie had carried the boy home to his mother, and had then run for the doctor; he had volunteered to sit up at night with the little sufferer, and altogether had displayed such an amount of sympathy that Lizzie was quite astonished, and Mrs. Pritchard's heart completely softened towards him. From that day forth Careless Campion and little Ben Pritchard were sworn allies. They went to work together, dined together, and, what was most important, came home together.

There were two things that, besides gratitude, drew Ben towards his new friend. These were, a

profound admiration for wee Jane, Charlie's niece, and a common taste for music. All the Pritchards were musical, and Ben caused no little annoyance to the neighbours by his persistent practice on his eldest brother's cornopean, whenever he could obtain possession of that coveted instrument. At other times he solaced himself with a humble Jew's harp, on which he performed with considerable sweetness and skill. Charlie Campion was surprised, and at first somewhat ashamed, to find that he had a genuine taste for music. This consciousness was first aroused by the pleasure which he found himself taking in Ben's modest performances during the dinner hour. He then began to drop into Mrs. Pritchard's parlour of an evening, where a very promiscuous musical entertainment was generally carried on after the lads had come home. Charlie and his wife, if she could come down, were always welcome; and Mrs. Pritchard noticed with pleasure that when a hymn was started her visitor's voice could often be heard joining in. No notice was taken of this; indeed the good woman more than once made remarks designed to put Charlie off his guard.

Then, again, Ben would often slip upstairs of an evening, and soothe the excited spirit of little Billy to sleep by the monotonous drone of his Jew's harp, while wee Jane listened with rapture, and Campion and his wife watched them in silence.

All this was very well, and very humanizing, as far as it went; but still, as we have said, Mr. Crawford was anxious about the Campions. No distinct, lasting, *religious* impression appeared to have been made. The evil spirit had been cast out: so far well.

The house was now swept and garnished ; but it was *empty*. What if the expelled demon should return in sevenfold strength or in some strange disguise ? It was a subject of much earnest prayer to Mr. Crawford, and of many a discussion with Mrs. Pritchard, who, having had her own experience of temptation and her own battle to fight, thoroughly entered into the clergyman's views. Lizzie had been induced to attend a mothers' meeting held every week in Mrs. Pritchard's room ; and that, no doubt, was a step in the right direction. But it was harder to bring good influences to bear on the man ; and it often seemed as if he was on the point of slipping back into his old ways, as his old companions, who had mysteriously vanished in his days of utter ruin, began to find him out again.

Ben indeed continued to be Charlie's good angel ; and Ben seemed to have a wonderfully clear idea of the work to which he thus found himself called. Yet it was a question with his parents whether the lad might not suffer more harm than he could possibly do good by this intimacy.

But now the time had come when that question should be answered,—when the strong Arm should be revealed that brings salvation, even when it strikes with sudden terror.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CELLAR DOOR.

EVERY one wondered at the rapidity with which Mr. Bateman had got up the terrace of houses on which Careless Campion with a number of other men were engaged. It seemed but a few weeks since the foundations were cut out, and now the roofs were on. Some people, and noticeably a builder who had failed to secure the contract for himself, said the buildings were not safe; and certainly the two great props that leaned against the gable of the end house suggested the idea of possible insecurity. But poor Bateman was pretty tightly tied down, both as to time and cost, and so there was nothing for it but to push on as fast as could be.

The weather had been persistently wet for several weeks, but the houses being now covered in, the men were able to work without hindrance. One morning, as Charlie was fitting a door to a coal cellar, he heard voices in the adjoining kitchen, apparently engaged in a dispute. Being somewhat tired of the cellar door, which declined to drop readily into its place, he stretched himself and strolled into the kitchen. There he found Ben Pritchard and the plumber on whom he attended heating some soldering irons; but they

were evidently heating themselves at the same time.

"I say, what's up now?" cried Charlie; for he was just in time to see Ben dodge a blow that the plumber had directed at him.

"What's up?" answered the plumber. "Why, it's this here young Benjamin, as wants to be up to preaching instead of doing what I tells him. Why, when I was a 'prentice, old Stevens would soon have soldered up my eye for me if I'd ventured to dispute his word."

"You'd best do what you're bid, Ben," said Charlie, who, though he liked the lad, had a decided opinion that "the young uns" ought to be kept in their place.

"I won't fetch drink for him or for any man," replied Ben resolutely. "You know I'm a Good Templar, and it's contrary to rule."

"Now, I ask you, did you ever hear the like of that in all your days?" exclaimed the plumber, appealing to Charlie. "A fellow's not to have his beer, because a young Sunday-school hopeful like this says no! Come, old fellow, I think you'd like a glass yourself, you look a bit hot; and as for me, I'm drier than ever, trying to talk that boy into reason."

The plumber threw his bait artfully, and Charlie swallowed it.

"Well, I don't mind a glass, just to get the sawdust out of my throat. But if Ben won't go, I don't see as how we ought to make him."

"Well, then," said the plumber in an argumentative tone—he had evidently filled his bottle before that morning—"will you go?"

"Suppose you go yourself," replied Charlie. "I want to get this beast of a door on its hinges, and Ben can hold it up for me while you're away."

That was true. But Charlie had two other reasons for declining to act as messenger: he was half afraid to trust himself inside a public-house, and he didn't wish to leave the plumber to finish his dispute alone with Ben.

"Well, then, if *you* won't go, and pious Ben won't go, there's nothing for it but to go myself. You, boy, see to them irons while I'm away." So saying, he took up a large empty beer-bottle and left the kitchen.

"Why don't you quit the drink altogether, Charlie?" asked Ben earnestly, as he held up the door while the carpenter screwed in the hinges.

"Perhaps I will some day," answered Charlie from the inside of the door, which opened outwards into a narrow passage.

"You oughtn't to have let him go for the beer; you know he's had enough."

"How could I prevent the man going? You didn't want to go, no more did I," pleaded Charlie.

"What need was there for any one to go?" pleaded Ben persistently.

"Well, I don't care much for this drinking 'tween times myself," admitted Charlie. "But I say, young chap, you've preached enough for the present, and had better go look after your irons." So saying, Charlie emerged from the cellar, and proceeded to contemplate his work from outside in a leisurely way. He was gently moving the newly-hung door to and fro, to see how it worked on its hinges, when Ben came rushing out of the kitchen with a shout.

"I say," he cried, "I believe the whole place is coming down!" And so saying, he darted through the half-open door into the vaulted cellar.

Campion made a movement towards the stairs. Then there was a rumbling sound, followed by the vision of a mass of falling brickwork in front of him; then he heard Ben cry out, and started back towards the cellar. Too late! Another terrific crash, and the door was forced almost shut by the falling bricks and timbers.

Ben Pritchard now found himself in perfect darkness, almost choked by lime dust. There was a terrible silence, broken every now and then by the creaking and snapping of timber beneath the weight of the ruined brickwork. After a time the lad collected himself, and began to feel cautiously about him. He soon found that the door of the cellar was not completely shut; and now that the dust was subsiding, and his eyes becoming accustomed to the gloom, he detected a faint glimmer of light that, so to say, *filtered* its way through the mass of ruins that had subsided into the basement.

It was an awful position for the child to be in; but somehow he felt no fear. His first thought was for his companion, with whom he had been conversing a few moments before. Where was Charlie? Crushed, no doubt, beneath the heaps of piled-up rubbish which he could now dimly distinguish. The thought of his friend lying crushed and mangled—perhaps at the other side of the door, within a few inches of him—almost unnerved the brave boy. At length he ventured to speak, but his voice sounded so muffled and strange that it quite frightened him. He realized that he was shut up in a sort of living tomb.

"Charlie!" he whispered. Then louder, "Charlie Campion!" But there was no response.

Then the lad sank on his hands and knees, and endeavoured to crawl through the narrow opening of the doorway. There was apparently a space outside, formed by a portion of the floor of the room above, which had fallen in a slanting position against the wall. Underneath this Ben crept a little way, but soon found it impossible to advance any further. Then, as he was about to force himself back into the cellar, his hand came on something soft and warm. He started back with a little cry, but at once reached forth his hand again. It rested now on a soft mass of curly hair. It was Charlie, lying senseless on his face! He had apparently been struck down when endeavouring to re-enter the cellar. Ben felt the body over in the darkness. Fortunately the broken floor had sheltered the head and upper parts, but the legs, from the knee downward, were firmly jammed beneath the fallen bricks and timbers.

"Charlie, Charlie! Can't you speak to me? Are you much hurt?" cried Ben in an agony. But Charlie remained still and silent.

Why should he lie so motionless? Again the boy groped with his hand over the body till he reached the head; then he found that his fingers were wet. As he touched the spot again to make sure, the wounded man uttered a groan, and made a convulsive effort to free his legs, but in vain.

"Can't you move yourself, Charlie?" asked the lad in a helpless, awe-struck voice.

Another struggle, followed by a shriek of pain, showed that Campion had recovered consciousness.

"Where am I, Ben? What's happened?" he asked in a weak voice.

The boy explained what had happened, and then urged Charlie to make another effort to free himself.

"It's no use," he said with a groan. "I've got one foot out; but it feels as if the other leg was broken. It's a bad job this, Ben, my boy."

Then Ben set to, in a space where he had to lie on his face, with the crushed boards creaking above his head, trying to remove the weight that rested on Charlie's leg. It was a perilous, weary job. Every now and then the sufferer moaned with agony, and more than once he seemed to faint away altogether. At length, with torn and bleeding hands, Ben had succeeded in clearing away a quantity of bricks and mortar, only to find that the foot was firmly held by a broken joist that lay upon it.

"My saw," gasped Charlie, whose strength was almost exhausted. "I think you'll find the bag in the cellar. Quick, Ben; I can't stand this much longer!"

Creeping back to the cellar, Ben found to his horror that the door had gradually yielded, so that now there was scarcely room to pass. He succeeded, however, in finding the saw, and after much exertion was able to set poor Charlie free. Then followed the terrible labour of getting the wounded man through that narrow aperture into the comparative safety of the cellar. This was only just accomplished in time; for now a final subsidence of the ruins sent the door to with a sudden crash. It seemed like the closing of the tomb upon them.

Hours passed, during which the brave boy endeavoured to keep up the man's sinking spirit. He spoke of a Father's love, and offered up simple prayers for their deliverance. At first Charlie seemed soothed and comforted, but now he began to be tormented with a feverish thirst.

"I have it!" cried the boy in a transport of sudden joy. "The water-pipe runs along the roof of the cellar, if only we can get at it."

This was managed with comparative ease. Three of Campion's chisels hammered into the wall up to the handle enabled Ben to reach the vaulted roof. A hole was readily bored in the pipe with a bradawl; but, alas! no water came. The poor boy dropped to the ground, and burst into tears.

A long silence followed. For the first time Ben was utterly cast down. He believed Charlie was dying, and there seemed no hope of rescue. For an hour or so he had shouted at intervals; but all to no purpose. Above their heads could be heard the dull rumble of the street traffic, and every now and then a distant sound of knocking. Had they been missed, and were their mates seeking to rescue them? For a time they were full of hope; but now the sounds grew fainter and less frequent. Charlie was almost exhausted; and Ben's throat was so dry, what between dust and thirst and shouting, that he could scarcely speak.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a strange, gurgling sound. "What's that?" said Charlie nervously.

"I know," cried Ben: "it's the water coming on! I might have remembered they never turn it on till three o'clock."

Ben's supposition was almost immediately confirmed by a little stream that came trickling down on his head. In a moment he had scrambled up his extemporized ladder, and stuck the bradawl into the hole. Then he descended for the tin can in which his dinner had been brought. This was soon filled and held to Charlie's eager lips; then the lad took a long refreshing draught for himself.

Charlie Campion had enjoyed many a glass of beer in his time, but never had he enjoyed anything so much as that drink of water out of a dirty tin can in that dark, grave-like cellar. Both man and boy felt restored to life and hope by the water that had been "turned on" so opportunely. That trickling stream seemed to connect them with the outer world once more; they felt sure they would be rescued; indeed, but for the torture of Charlie's wounded foot, they could have got on quite comfortably, they fancied, for a couple of days, now that a supply of water was secured. Ben told his companion the tale he had recently read of the Pont-y-Prid miners, who had been buried in the mine for over a week. They talked of the heroic exertions that had been made to deliver the sufferers, and speculated with new interest as to what their feelings must have been while day after day they listened to the strokes of the pick coming ever nearer and nearer, and at last were able to talk with their deliverers through the wall of coal that divided them.

"I think we ought to try and make the fellows hear us, Ben. Those chaps in the mine kept hammering away the whole time, didn't they?" said Charlie.

Ben, acting on this suggestion, got his back to the

door and kicked with all his might. But the dull, solid sound that resulted seemed to show that the passage outside was completely blocked. Distant sounds continued to be heard, but they seemed to come no nearer; the rumble in the street diminished; and when the water ceased to run, Ben knew that it was past six o'clock.

And now they prepared themselves to spend the night in their strange prison-house. Two cans and a bottle which Ben found had been filled with water, and about half their food had been eaten. As the hours crept on, Charlie began to suffer acute pain with his foot. While the water had been running, Ben had kept it constantly bathed with wet rags, into which he had torn part of his shirt; but now the precious element had to be treasured up for drinking, and Charlie suffered accordingly.

Little Ben did his best to keep up his companion's spirits and his own; but it was hard work. At times Charlie would drop off into an uneasy sleep, only to awake suddenly with a groan of pain. Then the boy would administer such simple consolation as he could. He repeated scraps of hymns and texts of Scripture; and Charlie, between waking and sleeping, went back to the old days when he and Hugh had gone to Sunday school together—or rather had started and returned together, for many a day Charlie had hung about the doors for the whole hour and never gone in at all. Then he recalled his brief life-history, since he emancipated himself, as he thought it, from all moral control. He saw now how his entire course had been steadily down hill. His dead children, and the miserable home in which they had died, rose up

before him. In his weakness he began to wander. He fancied he saw Mr. Crawford drawing back a curtain, and there lay three thin, miserable little ones crying and moaning together; then when he stooped towards them, they clutched him by the hair, and drew him down—down—down! Then he started up with an oath, only to fall back heavily on the bare floor of the cellar.

"Hush, hush, Charlie; remember God sees and hears us!" cried Ben in a tone of authority.

"I tell you I'm buried; I'm in the cold grave, and the babies are pressing atop of me," sobbed the terrified man, as yet but half awake.

Then Ben grew frightened, and began to cry. It was now Charlie's turn to play the comforter. He drew the shivering lad to himself, and they crouched together for warmth in the corner of the cold, damp vault.

The night dragged slowly on; the street was quiet, but in the distance they still fancied they heard the sounds of men at work.

After a long time, they knew not how long, Ben said softly, "Charlie, I know that mother's praying for me,—for *us*."

"I've no mother—none at least that will give me a thought," answered Charlie bitterly.

"Don't say that; perhaps she's praying for you now," pleaded the boy.

Charlie gave a disagreeable laugh, that sounded yet more disagreeable in that gloomy place. "Praying ain't much in my mother's line, boy; and I'm about the last person she'd trouble herself about."

"Your wife will pray for you anyhow. I've heard

her often ; and she'll pray harder now you're buried, you know."

"You've heard Lizzie pray for me, have you ?" said Charlie in a wondering tone.

"Oh yes," answered Ben ; "and I *know* it will be all right."

Then there was a longer silence, and Ben knew that Campion had fallen asleep. He crept closer to his friend, and fell asleep too.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TWO MOURNERS.

ON the day of the accident Mr. Crawford happened to have some business in Pine Apple Court. As he passed through the narrow entrance, a glance round the court (usually quiet and deserted-looking at this hour of the day) showed him that something was wrong. It was an hour past dinner-time; yet several men were lingering about the place, while all the women, and such children as were not at school, were gathered in groups at the open door-ways. One door only was fast closed,—it was that of Mr. Pritchard's house at the far end of the court.

"What has happened?" inquired the clergyman, stopping at the first door where a group of women were collected eagerly talking.

"There's been an accident at Bateman's buildings, and word's just come that Charlie Campion and Mrs. Pritchard's wee boy is missing. Two men has been took out dead, and it's feared there is more. I say as there should be an Act of Parliament against those jerry-built houses, that come rattling down like a pack of cards when there's a puff of wind."

So spoke Mrs. Smith, a sturdy-looking washer-woman, and a murmured chorus of approval followed

her words. Mr. Crawford too expressed his agreement, and then passed on till he stood before the closed door at the top of the court. No one responded to his knock, so he raised the latch and walked in. All was silent, and it seemed as if death already reigned in the house. Finding no one in the front parlour or in the kitchen, the clergyman softly closed the hall door and went upstairs. Attracted by the sound of voices, he knocked at Lizzie Campion's door, paused a few moments, and then knocked again. The door opened, and Mrs. Pritchard stood before him, pale and anxious, but with an expression of calm resignation on her worn face.

"You've heard of our great trouble, sir?" she said softly, taking the clergyman's proffered hand.

"Yes; I've heard that your boy and Campion are missing, but no particulars. How did it happen?"

"They say nearly the whole row of Bateman's new houses has fallen right in. There weren't many men at work at the time, and most of them managed to get away safe. Two was killed outright, and there's no word to be got of Charlie Campion and my poor boy."

"Well, we must still hope that by God's mercy they may be got out alive," said Mr. Crawford, endeavouring himself to hope against hope. "Is it known what part they were working at?"

"No one seems sure about Campion; but they say my boy was in the basement heating the irons for the man he worked to,—that's one of them that was killed. He had been across to the public for beer, and was just going back through the door when the place fell and killed him on the spot. The men say

he must have been half stupid, or he'd have heard them shouting. But oh, sir, it's hard to think of my poor boy lying there bruised and bleeding! If I knew he was dead, and that the Lord had taken him, I think I could bear it better."

"Have you sent for his father?" asked Mr. Crawford.

"Oh yes, sir; you may be sure we sent at once! But he's out of town on a job, and won't be home till late. But two of his brothers is there helping the men to clear away the rubbish, and perhaps we'll have news before long. But won't you come in and say a word to poor Lizzie? it's worse for her than for me."

The clergyman entered the room. It was not so bare and desolate as when last we stood there; but it was no less sorrowful. By the window stood Willie Champion's eldest child, trying hard to amuse little Billy, while the tears streamed down her cheeks. At the fireside sat Lizzie rocking herself to and fro in an agony of grief.

"Have you brought him home to me, as his father was brought home before him?" she sobbed, without looking up.

"No, no, Lizzie; it's Mr. Crawford has come to say a word of hope and comfort to us. Look up, my lass, and don't despair yet," said Mrs. Pritchard tenderly.

Evidently this good woman's *own* grief had but rendered her more capable of entering into the woe of another.

"There is no hope and comfort for me," moaned Lizzie. "But it's just what we deserved: we forsook God, and now he has forsaken us."

"Come, don't speak like that," said Mr. Crawford,

laying his hand on her shoulder. "Thank God, there is hope and comfort for every one, just as there is forgiveness too! You mustn't give way to despair, Mrs. Campion. Your husband may be saved yet. Perhaps he did not go to his work at all, for no one seems to have seen him."

"Oh yes, he went to his work!" cried Lizzie. "It's many a day since he lost an hour. And it's hard on me now to lose him, just when things was getting a little better with us."

And she looked up and gazed round the now tidy and comfortable room with bewildered, tearful eyes.

But if things had changed outwardly, they had inwardly changed still more. Lizzie was no longer the rebellious, self-confident woman she had been when first Mr. Crawford had entered that room not so many weeks before. Her heart had been softened and humbled, and she had learned to see the folly and error of her former life. Now, therefore, she was prepared to listen to such consolations as Mr. Crawford had it in his power to offer. She was enabled to submit herself to the Divine will, and to accept with patience the sudden trial that had been sent to her. Then, after a time, Mr. Crawford knelt and prayed with the two afflicted women. Whilst humbly hoping that those they loved might still be restored to them, he asked that above and before all things they might have grace to submit themselves to whatsoever the Divine Providence might ordain for them, and might be enabled to support and sustain each other in their hour of trial. Then they rose refreshed; and Mr. Crawford, before leaving, asked if old Mrs. Campion had been told of the accident.

"She hasn't heard of it, as far as I know; and I didn't quite feel as if I ought to be the first to send her word without speaking to you, Lizzie," said Mrs. Pritchard, turning towards Charlie's wife.

"Well," answered Lizzie, "I think the poor old body ought to be told. It's no time to bear malice, this,—is it, sir?"

"Perhaps I had best go and see her?" suggested Mr. Crawford. "We would not wish her to hear it from strangers. I have not much time this afternoon, but I could just look in."

"If you would, sir, I'm sure you would be doing a kindness. It's a sad thing to see a mother and son separated like that; and I doubt she'll take on all the more to think of it," said Mrs. Pritchard.

"I'm sure it's no fault of mine," pleaded Lizzie through her tears. "I've often tried to bring them together; but the old lady was so hard."

"I know she was hard; but don't let us judge her now, poor thing," put in the clergyman. "I'll go and break the matter to her. Good-bye; God help you both."

And so saying, Mr. Crawford made his way downstairs, and out through the still crowded and excited court,

CHAPTER XV.

“WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?”

It was with slow and anxious step that Mr. Crawford ascended the long flights of stairs that led up to Mrs. Campion's rooms. He remembered the promise he had been obliged to give—not to mention Charlie, nor to ask his mother to be reconciled to him; and he now wondered how the old woman would receive the terrible intelligence of which he was the bearer. Having reached the top of the stairs, he paused for a few moments to take breath and collect his thoughts. More than once his hand was raised to knock; and when at length his knuckles descended with a somewhat feeble tap, the sharp and querulous direction to “Come in” jarred painfully on his ears.

Mrs. Campion and her room both looked clean and trim and tidy as ever; but it struck Mr. Crawford, as he entered, that the old woman was even more sad-looking and bent than when he had last seen her.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Campion. How is your rheumatism to-day?” asked the clergyman, making an effort to speak in an unconcerned and natural tone.

“I'm pretty bad to-day, thank you; but it's no use complaining,” answered the widow, rising stiffly.

Now, though Charlie's name had never again been

mentioned, Mrs. Campion could not see the clergyman without being reminded of the son against whom she had so resolutely steeled her heart. Thus there was always a certain amount of embarrassment and reserve about the commencement of these visits. Mr. Crawford had long been aware of this, and he rightly felt that his very presence was, without a word being spoken, a constant protest against the mother's unreasonable and unchristian resentment. To-day, however, he felt constrained to speak at once on the subject which was in both their hearts.

"I have got news that I am sure you will be sorry to hear, Mrs. Campion," he said softly, as he took the thin withered hand in his.

"About Charlie, I suppose? But I thought, sir, it was settled we weren't to speak of him?"

"I promised never to urge you to meet your son again; but now we fear you may never have the opportunity, in this world at least."

"He's dead, then, I suppose? killed, mayhap, like his father was?" said Mrs. Campion, apparently quite unmoved.

Nor did she display any sign of emotion, nor even of particular interest, as Mr. Crawford told the sad story of the accident.

"It's a pity for those who were depending on him," was her only remark when the narrative ended.

The good clergyman could scarcely restrain the expression of his grief and almost horror at this display of hard-heartedness on the part of a mother; but thinking, or at all events hoping, that she might really be more deeply affected than she chose to acknowledge, he tried to speak gently and kindly to

her. Then, when there was a pause, he suggested a few words of prayer. A flash—was it of surprise or of some better emotion?—shot across Mrs. Campion's hard features as with a silent gesture she assented. It was a simple, earnest prayer, that the experience of suffering and death, often sudden death, all round, might be the means of warning those who were spared how frail and uncertain their own condition was, that so they might have grace to apply their hearts to the true and heavenly wisdom. In conclusion, a hope was expressed that if, by God's mercy, he who was in their thoughts might have escaped, or might yet be saved, his deliverance would be the beginning of a new life, and an occasion of family reconciliation.

When, after a solemn pause, Mr. Crawford rose from his knees, and looked in Mrs. Campion's face, he could detect no sign of softness there. She thanked him, however, and said it was kind of him to have come. Then he promised to come again when anything more was known; and so went down the long staircase with a heavy heart, still, however, praying that some grain at least of the good seed sown might find a soft place where it might perchance take root.

It was a particularly busy day with Mr. Crawford. He had a number of engagements for the afternoon, concluding with an evening meeting which was likely to keep him out till after ten o'clock. Thus he was able to spend only a few minutes in passing at the scene of the accident. A number of men were hard at work clearing away the mass of ruins; but it was feared that they would soon be obliged to suspend operations on account of the threatening condition of one gable wall that now stood alone and unsupported.

The wind was rising, and there seemed every prospect of a stormy night. It was therefore resolved, just as the clergyman arrived, that no more lives should be risked by continuing the explorations during the night. There seemed indeed little or nothing to be gained by persevering in the dangerous work. Only Campion and the boy Pritchard now remained unaccounted for; and if, as appeared probable, they had both been in the kitchen when the building fell in, they must have been inevitably crushed to death. Yet it was with reluctance that the men were preparing to relinquish their task, or at all events to suspend it till the wind abated, or some steps were taken to remove or secure the tottering wall which every moment threatened to bury the brave fellows beneath a second ruin.

The forecasts of the weather proved correct, as Mr. Crawford experienced on his homeward walk that night. The rain poured down as heavily and steadily as the wind would permit, and it was impossible to hold an umbrella against the fierce gusts that came whirling round the street corners from the most unexpected and opposite directions. Anxious to know if anything fresh had occurred, the clergyman went a little out of his way so as to pass through the street where, till that morning, Bateman's buildings had stood. Here a scene of ghastly desolation presented itself. Two dimly flickering lanterns marked where a barrier had been thrown across the street, while in the open space beyond a flaring brazier cast a lurid glare on the chaotic heaps of ruined brickwork. Mr. Crawford noticed at once that the wall which had a few hours before caused so much uneasiness no longer

obstructed the view. He was informed by the watchman, whom he found sheltering himself near the fire at the lee side of a mass of broken timbers, that the greater part of the wall had fallen a couple of hours before with a terrific crash.

Mr. Crawford gazed in silence on the dreary scene. He thought of the bright, healthy, intelligent lad whom he had seen in his place in Sunday school but a few days before. He thought of Charlie Campion with that feeling of tenderness which every one, except his own mother, seemed compelled to entertain for the poor careless fellow. Of late he had cherished great hopes of Charlie; but now it seemed as if the last of many days of grace afforded to the young man had suddenly been cut short. It was terrible to think of the two lying there, within perhaps a few feet of where he stood, crushed, cold, and lifeless.

While thus meditating, Mr. Crawford was startled by a moaning sound which seemed too full of living misery to be merely the voice of the mocking night-wind.

"Did you hear that, watchman?" he cried. "Could it possibly be one of those poor fellows beneath the ruins?"

"No, no," said the old man, peeping out from his shelter; "the poor lads are still enough long ere this. It's Campion's mother, that's been here all the evening waiting news of the boy. I told her it was no use, and asked her to go home; but it's no manner of good to talk to her. She's half crazed, the poor old body, and says her son is lying buried beneath the steps she's sitting on."

"It was a shame for you to let her sit there in the

cold and wet such a night as this," cried Mr. Crawford indignantly.

"How could I help it, I'd like to know?" growled the old man, slowly swinging his arms together as if to keep himself awake and warm. "I told the policeman about her, and he moved her on for a bit; but she came back again, so I thought I'd let her be."

Without waiting to hear more, the clergyman made his way towards the spot from whence the sound that had attracted him seemed to proceed. There, huddled together on the doorstep of one of the ruined houses, was a wet mass of black clothing. Only a slight rocking motion and an occasional groan gave evidence that any life was hid beneath.

"Mrs. Champion," said the clergyman kindly, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the doubled-up figure.

"It's no use your talking to me and annoying me; I won't stir from this spot till they bring my boy to me. What harm am I doing that you can't let me sit here above his grave in peace?"

"But it's wet and cold, and nothing can be done till morning. You can come back quite early, you know; only let me take you home now."

"Oh, it's you, sir, is it?" said the old woman, slowly rising to her feet, and looking dreamily in Mr. Crawford's face. "The policeman said I was drunk, and the watchman says I am mad; but you'll know better than that, won't you?"

"Come, Mrs. Champion, this terrible trouble has upset you; but you ought to go home till morning. I'll call and see you then."

But all his efforts were in vain. For more than

half an hour he pleaded with and tried to comfort her. He walked up and down, hoping that she would weary, but no inducement could get her beyond the end of the street. The policeman came and added vague threats to the clergyman's remonstrance; and finally even the surly watchman suggested that as a compromise she should take shelter near the fire. To this she seemed to consent, and then Mr. Crawford with a heavy heart made his way home. It was but little he could sleep that night.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. CAMPION DREAMS AGAIN.

POOR old Mrs. Campion, now thoroughly exhausted, fell into an uneasy sleep. But there was no rest for the weary brain: confused and mingled memories of former days kept coming together in strange fantastic combinations. She dreamed of the long-past years of her early married life; and yet the consciousness of the bitter realities of the present was never wholly lost. The recollection of a foolish quarrel she had once had with her husband came vividly before her; and then she seemed to be looking on him as he had been brought home dead on that never-to-be-forgotten morning. She took his hand, and asked forgiveness; but while she looked into his face, her eyes grew dim with tears. She brushed them hastily away, and lo, it was no longer her husband who lay there, but her son Charlie. Though plainly dead, he yet seemed to smile on her in the old careless, irresistible fashion that had so often turned away her wrath from his boyish delinquencies. She bent forward to kiss him, and then the figure faded away, and instead Mr. Crawford was kneeling there, and uttering words which, though she could not catch them, seemed to pour comfort and rest into her soul.

Suddenly Mrs. Campion found herself wide awake. She was very cold. The fire in the brazier had burned low; but the clouds had now broken up, and at intervals the moon cast a clear and ghastly light on the scene of the accident. Mechanically she rose and wandered towards the spot beneath which she believed her favourite son to lie a corpse. After looking around the desolate scene for a few minutes, she sat down on the step where the clergyman had found her some hours before. The storm was now completely over, and the air was still and quiet. Again the weary creature dropped off to sleep, and again the old distressing visions floated before her. She recalled Mr. Crawford's visit the day before, and fancied she heard his timid knock at the door. Again and again she cried "Come in;" but the door was not opened, though at each repetition the knocking seemed to become more and more imperative. In her dream she started from her seat and opened the door herself, crying angrily, "Come in!" At first there was no one visible; but then she stooped, and saw her boy Charlie sitting on the stairs faint and bleeding.

That terrible vision awoke her. She became conscious that she was sitting on the cold doorstep, and knew that she had been dreaming. But why, then, did that persistent sound of knocking continue? For some seconds she listened with closed eyes and a sort of vague interest. Then suddenly springing forward, she threw herself on her hands and knees on the flag at the foot of the steps, and listened intensely. Yes, the knocking came from thence. It was right beneath her, on the lower side of the flag on which she knelt.

"It's my son—my Charlie!—Yes, yes, my boy;

your own mother's here!" And the poor thing beat her thin knuckles cruelly against the cold flagstone.

Then she rose and flew upon the sleeping watchman, whom she gradually shook into consciousness. Grumbling much to himself, the old fellow took his lantern in one hand and his heavy stick in the other, and followed Mrs. Campion. There was no sound to be heard, nor did the mother's plaintive cries bring any response.

"I doubt you've been dreaming, old lady, and heard the knocking in your sleep. Best go home and rest a bit; you're nigh famished." And there was some tenderness even in *his* hoarse voice as the old man spoke.

"Dreaming! I know I was dreaming; but I heard it after I was awake too. There, just there," and Mrs. Campion struck again with her skinny knuckles on a spot near the centre of the flag.

Then the watchman, with much deliberation, laid down his lantern and struck three solemn blows with his iron-feruled stick on the place pointed out by Mrs. Campion. A silence followed that seemed an age, then three distinct taps were heard from beneath.

"There, there! am I dreaming now?" cried the woman, in uncontrollable excitement.

But the old man remained unmoved and as yet unconvinced. Raising his stick again he let it descend once and rest on the flag. Almost immediately there was a response. Then, as a final experiment, he gave four distinct taps, counting one, two, three, four. One, two, three, four, came the answering signal back.

"I believe the boys is safe shut up in the cellar by the mercy of God! Run, run to the corner, missis, and call the policeman!"

Mrs. Campion needed no second bidding. With her gray hair streaming behind her, she rushed into the main street, there to encounter, not the policeman, but her sons William and Hugh, who had come in search of her.

Hugh having risen before the dawn of day, had been much surprised and alarmed to find his mother's room empty. At first he thought she might have gone to Mrs. Pritchard's, but getting no news of her there, he had hastened to rouse his eldest brother, and the two had immediately set out for Bateman's buildings, in the hope of finding her there. Thus it happened that just as they were turning the corner, the breathless woman rushed into the arms of her sons. But a few words were needed to explain the situation, and then William Campion, seizing a crowbar from the heap of tools left by the explorers when they quitted work the evening before, forced up the flag from beneath which the sounds had proceeded. The other two men aided with their hands, and so with a sudden jerk the flag was thrown back from its place. Mrs. Campion, who held the lantern, asserted that at that moment something like the point of a crowbar had shot up through the rubbish thus laid bare; but so quickly had it vanished that none of the others could be sure of having seen anything. This was very puzzling. The men shouted, but there came no response, and the brothers began to fear that perhaps both the watchman and their mother had been deceived. William, however, threw off his coat and set to to clear away the six or eight inches of ballast that intervened between the flags and the crown of the cellar arch, while Hugh hurried off to give the alarm to Mr. Bateman.

CHAPTER IV.

LIZZIE'S STORY.

It was the old tale that many a foolish, self-willed girl has had to tell, though it was not so distressing a version of it as we have sometimes been compelled to mourn over.

Lizzie Critchley was the eldest of a large family; and as her father was merely a farm labourer, the child had been compelled to go to service at a very early age. But little Lizzie was fortunate in having for her first mistress a God-fearing and sensible woman, who not only permitted her to go to Sunday school, and to a class for instruction in reading and writing on a couple of evenings in the week, but who herself devoted no little time and thought to the training of the child. Mrs. Ripley was a simple, hard-working person,—not very well educated, not at all rich; but she always looked upon her “girl” as a member of the family, and especially in the case of this little one, whom she had taken a mere child from her father’s home, she felt a solemn responsibility laid upon her. She honestly tried, therefore, to make her not merely an efficient servant, but an intelligent Christian.

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In an incredibly short time half a dozen labourers were on the spot; and a considerable portion of the arch being now laid bare, they proceeded to break through the brickwork as carefully as possible. It was a terribly anxious time. No sound could be heard from below. What could it mean? Was it possible that both Mrs. Campion and the watchman had been deceived, either as to the reality or to the origin of the sounds they had heard? Mr. Bateman did not think that likely; he was rather inclined to believe that whoever had made the signals was now lying insensible in the cellar. If so, he might be crushed to death by any portion of the brickwork falling in upon him; each brick, therefore, as it was loosened, had to be carefully removed by the hand. This made the operation very tedious. At length, however, a hole was pierced, and then William Campion reported that he thought he could hear a faint groaning. By this time the day had dawned, and a large and excited crowd was gathered near the spot. As soon as the hole was large enough, William Campion descended by a rope with a light. Then in a few seconds his report, whispered to the man above him, spread through the crowd. The boy Pritchard was lying insensible or dead right beneath the hole, while at the farther end of the cellar Charlie was found by his brother moaning faintly, and in the last stage of exhaustion.

The poor boy was soon raised to the surface, and the doctor who was in attendance at once pronounced that he was only insensible,—the result, no doubt, of exhaustion and of a blow which he seemed to have received. The rescue of Charlie was not so easily effected. One of his legs had been firmly jammed by

the closing against it of the cellar door, and every effort for his relief caused the poor fellow excruciating pain. A large portion of the arch was soon cleared away and a ladder brought, by which the doctor, Mr. Crawford, and two or three of the workmen descended. Poor Charlie was indeed in a pitiable condition, and at first the doctor feared it would be necessary to resort to the desperate expedient of amputating his leg. But restoratives having been administered, the sufferer became a little stronger, and valiant efforts were made to release the imprisoned limb. A portion of the door was sawn away, and two of the men endeavoured with bars to lift the mass of broken timber that pressed on the poor fellow's foot. During this time Charlie lay with his hand tightly clasped in Mr. Crawford's. He never uttered a groan, or tried to move, till one of the men, feeling the timber yield a little, cried,—

“Now, Charlie, have a try for it!”

Then, with a desperate wrench and a sudden cry of pain, he drew away the wounded limb.

The next job was to get him to the surface, and this was not effected without considerable difficulty and intense suffering. At length, however, he was got on a stretcher and carried to the hospital. It was there discovered that both legs had been severely crushed, and that one had sustained a bad compound fracture.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BRAVE BOY.

It did not appear that Ben Pritchard had sustained any serious injury, and he was soon able to give an account of the providential way in which he and Charlie Campion had been preserved. With part of the story of those hours spent in that living tomb the reader is already acquainted. The boy described the sense of utter desolation and almost hopeless despair that had come on them when the sounds of the workmen ceased. After that he had been scarcely conscious of the lapse of time till the terrific crash of the falling wall had made their prison-house tremble. Then the boy heard Charlie Campion crying out that his legs were being crushed to pieces by the ruins, which had still further subsided. After a few frantic struggles to free himself Charlie had fainted. The boy thought he was dead.

“At first I felt awful lonely and frightened to think that I was left there all alone with the dead body. But then I remembered something you said to me last Sunday, mother, about God being everywhere and seeing everything, so I said my prayers, and that seemed to set me up a bit. Then I crept over beside Charlie and heard him breathing, so I knew the life was in

him, and then I wasn't so much afraid. Then when he came to himself I tried to comfort him, and said all the hymns and texts and bits of poetry that I could remember."

"And did he like that?" asked poor Lizzie, who, with Mrs. Pritchard, was sitting beside the young sufferer's bed.

"Oh yes, he liked it ever so much, and made me say some of the things twice over. And that went on till I think he must have gone to sleep, or become insensible again, for I could get no answer from him; so then I just sat still and said it all to myself."

The lad lay back in the bed quite exhausted, and the two women, seeing that his lips were moving, forbore for some time to disturb him. At length the motion of the lips ceased, and they thought that he had fallen asleep.

"So far the Lord has been very merciful to us, Mrs. Campion, has he not?" said Mrs. Pritchard softly, as she looked on her boy, who lay perfectly still with closed eyes and a smile on his lips.

"He has been merciful, indeed; but you deserved it, while we didn't," answered Lizzie, burying her head in her hands.

"I don't like to hear you speak that way,—as if there could be a difference between one sinner and another in his sight. It would be a bad job if he dealt with *any* of us according to our deservings. I always remember what we say in church, 'Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, neither rewarded us according to our iniquities.' And, indeed, if it was any use to compare two sinners at all, I believe I've been a greater one than ever you were."

"But you've repented and been forgiven," said Lizzie, looking up with streaming eyes.

"And haven't you repented and been forgiven too?"

"Well, I've tried, but I seem so hard and bad, and at times I think I can't make nothing of it." And again Lizzie buried her face and sobbed.

"But the loving Saviour can make plenty of it," pleaded her comforter earnestly. "You must be looking to him and not to yourself, my poor girl. The very first thing we've got to find out is that everything comes from God, and that there's nothing good in ourselves."

The conversation was interrupted by a slight movement on the boy's part. In answer to some tender inquiry of his mother's he said,—

"No, I don't think I've exactly been asleep, for I heard you talking all the time; only it seemed like as if I and Charlie Campion was saying it down in that dark place where we couldn't see each other's faces."

The two women looked at each other in silence. Then the boy went on in a somewhat excited voice,—

"But I want to tell you the rest of it, mother, and how it was that I got my head hurt. After Charlie had gone off, I sat there a long time thinking of you and wee Jane and lots of things. Then all of a sudden it seemed as if voices was talking right over my head. I listened as hard as I could, and thought there was a sound like feet moving about; but it soon stopped, and I couldn't be sure what it was. But then I began to think that perhaps I could manage to make myself heard up in the street. So I felt about till I got hold

of a long iron bar and an empty cement barrel. Then I stood on the barrel and worked away at the roof till I got the bar right through it. It went up quite easily after that till it came on a flag or something, and then it wouldn't go further. But I thought some one might hear, so I kept hammering every now and then. And then, O mother, wasn't I glad when I heard them knocking back to me up above! Then all of a sudden the flag, or whatever it was, gave way, and the bar I was working with slipped up through the hole so quick that I lost my balance and fell right down. I think it must have been the bar that hit me on the head, because I don't remember anything more till I found myself in the street with all the people round me."

Just at this moment the doctor entered. He shook his head gravely to find the boy talking in such an excited manner, and took the opportunity of impressing on his mother the absolute necessity of rest and quiet.

"Well, you see, sir, he seemed wishful to tell us all about the accident, and I thought it better to let him have his say out; but I'll mind what you say, and keep him as quiet as I can."

Mrs. Pritchard spoke apologetically, and then, following the doctor to the door, added in a low anxious tone,—

"What do you think of him, doctor?"

"I think he's very weak and feverish; his system has sustained a great shock. The one thing he needs now is quiet—absolute quiet; mind that."

Then he went away, and Mrs. Pritchard was glad to find, on returning to the sick-room, that the boy had dropped off into a peaceful sleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

YIELDING ICE.

THE period that followed the providential rescue described in the last chapters was one of suffering and anxiety to all of those whose history we have been hitherto tracing; yet was it a time abundantly blessed by Him who never chasteneth his children except it be for their profit.

Old Mrs. Campion was brought to the very door of death as the result of that dreadful night of anxiety and exposure. Though of late years a martyr to rheumatism, she had never given way or stayed a day in bed since the time when poor tiny Hugh was born. At first, therefore, she was terribly impatient, and fiercely determined not to admit that she was ill; but after a few days' struggling she was forced to yield and take to her bed. A dreary and lonely time she had of it, lying there day after day in a state of utter prostration. No one could well be spared to look after the invalid; nor indeed did she give much encouragement to those who sought to be kind to her. William's wife or wee Jane would come in for an hour in the morning to set all straight, and poor patient Hugh managed to run up from the office several times a day; but for hours the sick woman

would lie quite still, with closed eyes and hard rigid features, "not wishing to trouble any one," and not particularly gracious to such few neighbours as might from time to time, out of pity for her forlorn condition, climb those formidable flights of stairs to inquire how she was.

Almost the only visitor who was not repulsed by Mrs. Campion's chilly manner was Mr. Crawford. He called regularly, and after a few days was gratified by a brief acknowledgment that his visits were not unwelcome. Very little was said, but the clergyman knew that, coming from the lips it did, that little meant very much.

One day, when the worst was over, and Mrs. Campion was beginning to pick up her strength again, Mr. Crawford entered the room with a bright smile on his face.

"Well, Mrs. Campion, I've got news to-day that you will surely be glad to hear: Charlie is to come out of hospital to-morrow. The doctors say he is doing nicely, and that there is a fair prospect of his completely recovering the use of his foot."

Though he spoke cheerfully, Mr. Crawford was a little anxious to see how this piece of intelligence would be received. During her illness, Mrs. Campion had scarcely made any mention of Charlie, and indeed it seemed as if she was determined to show that the outburst of feeling into which she had been betrayed had now passed away. The good clergyman now, therefore, waited her reply with anxiety, for it grieved him sorely to see the mother's heart, which had for a time been so deeply touched, again hardening towards her son.

"It's a poor home he has to go to; but he ought to be thankful his life has been spared."

"He *is* thankful, Mrs. Campion;" and there was just a shade of sternness in Mr. Crawford's voice. "I have seldom seen any one so much improved by suffering—so softened, so humbled, and brought to a right sense of things."

Of course Mrs. Campion understood the significance of the words, and still more of the tone in which they were spoken. She was not angry, however, and merely answered with a sigh,—

"Well, he's but a young man yet, and the lesson may do him good; but it's not so easy to change the heart that's old and tough."

"I've told you often, Mrs. Campion," answered the clergyman earnestly, "that there is only one way in which any heart, old or young, can be touched and softened; and that is, by the breath of God's Holy Spirit. We must beware how we resist that Spirit when he is pleading with us."

"Yes, sir; you've told me that, I know. But I've had a long life and a hard life, and somehow it seems as if my heart was quite shrivelled up; maybe I never had much softness."

She spoke in a tone so subdued and sad that Mr. Crawford felt his heart yearn towards the poor woman.

"I know," he said, "that your life has been a sad and troubled one, Mrs. Campion; but remember that God knows it too. He knows all you have had to go through, and he has ever been willing to help you to bear your burden. Perhaps you were once too proud in your own strength, and would not ask for his help.

Well, we need not go back on the past, because, in God's mercy, the present and future are left to us. I am sure that his Spirit is seeking you. You say your heart is hard and shrivelled up; but were you not surprised to find how tender it was when you thought your foolish erring boy was lying buried beneath that heap of ruins?"

"I *was* surprised, sir. I think I must have been mad for the time."

"It was a wholesome sort of madness, and a thing to be thankful for," continued Mr. Crawford. "The fact is, Mrs. Campion, you have hardened your heart against your son, forgetting that if God were extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is not one of us could stand before him. And now that in his mercy he has sought to awaken you, I implore you to beware how you resist his grace by continuing to cherish an unnatural and unforgiving temper."

There was a long and painful silence, then Mrs. Campion said,—

"Well, sir, I may shortly have need of forgiveness myself, and therefore I'd be sorry to be unforgiving to a fellow-creature. I have no grudge against Charlie now, and I only hope he'll make a good use of the life that has been spared him."

"O Mrs. Campion!" exclaimed Mr. Crawford, "do you think Charlie can ever forget that, under God, he owes his life to his mother's devotion and love? Can you forget it yourself?"

"Does he think of it that way?" she asked, with a momentary gleam in her dark eyes. But quickly she added, in the old hard tone, "It's not much most young men I hear of now-a-days trouble themselves

about their mothers' devotion, or all the hard toil they've gone through for them."

"I know," admitted Mr. Crawford, "that many young people are very careless and ungrateful. But I really think Charlie has had a lesson that will last him for life. Come, Mrs. Campion, you must make friends!"

"I wouldn't wish to be other than friends with any one."

"You'd like Charlie to come and see you, then?"

There was another silence, while the last struggle was waged in that stubborn heart.

"Well, if it was his own wish and his wife's, I couldn't say against it."

"Then I may tell him so?" said the clergyman.

"Yes, you may tell him that," she answered.

It was not much of a concession, but Mr. Crawford was fain to be satisfied with it for the time. Then in subsequent interviews with the sick woman he always spoke of Charlie's visit as a thing to be looked forward to with pleasure. In a week the doctor thought he might get out for a little; perhaps in two or three he would be able to mount the stairs with the aid of a stick.

Thus from time to time reports were brought, and Mrs. Campion found herself unawares quite looking forward to the promised visit; and more than once, lying alone and half asleep, she fancied she heard a slow heavy tread, accompanied by the sound of a stick on the stairs, outside her door. That was just as Mr. Crawford would have wished it.

CHAPTER XIX.

“IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD?”

CHARLIE CAMPION'S first visit was not to his mother. After his return home from the hospital, he had not progressed as rapidly as had been hoped. With something of his old impetuosity, he had endeavoured to use his foot too soon, and had suffered in consequence. Thus at the end of three weeks, instead of being able to walk to his mother's, he could do nothing more than hobble along the passage, with his foot suspended from his neck in a long sling, to the little room where his late companion in danger lay sick in bed.

Poor little Ben had never quite recovered the shock of the accident, and it now seemed as though his young life was slowly ebbing away. For a time, indeed, he had apparently been all right again, and he had paid his friend Charlie more than one visit during his stay in hospital. But returning from one of these expeditions the lad had taken cold, and the doctor now feared that, with his constitution so tried as it had been, he might sink into consumption. He had a bad cough, which prevented him resting satisfactorily either by day or by night; but all this the young fellow took bravely and patiently, as coming from a Father's hand. His

mother was almost constantly with him to cheer and support; and in the evening, when her many duties were discharged, faithful wee Jane would come in and sit by her friend for an hour or so. But it was most touching to see Charlie Campion's devotion to the boy. Despite the doctor's injunction that he should keep still, and with his leg at rest as much as possible, Charlie would hop and stumble and drag himself along the narrow passage several times a day, to see how Ben was getting on. Then the two would sit and talk about the things that had been said and done during those terrible hours of dark imprisonment; and Mrs. Pritchard or Lizzie would sit and listen in wonder while Charlie recalled one or another of the boy's prudent and thoughtful sayings, which, commonplace as they might have seemed at other times, had pierced to his very heart during those agonized hours of waiting wherein they had both tasted of the bitterness of death. Generally these scenes were terminated by a fit of coughing, and then Charlie, leaning on his wife or Mrs. Pritchard, would stumble back to his own room.

Thus the days passed by,—weary, anxious days, and yet days in which the good and merciful designs of a Father's providence were being steadily worked out. Mr. Crawford looked in several times a week, and wee Jane brought news every evening of how "the old lady" was getting on. This child had now become the recognized go-between and medium of communication between the divided members of the family. Old Mrs. Campion had become quite attached to the girl, and found it comparatively easy to send back by her kindly responses to the inquiries that came from

Pine Apple Court. It only seemed now to need time and patience for the complete reconciliation of the long-estranged mother and son.

Ben alone seemed to make no progress towards recovery. One day, as Charlie returned to his room leaning his big hand on Mrs. Pritchard's shoulder, he spoke the thought that had for several days been uppermost in his mind.

"I say, mother, I doubt Ben's not doing much good, is he?"

"Don't you think he's looking so well, Charlie?" she responded in a wistful tone.

"I can't say as he seems to me to gain much ground; but you know I'm an impatient sort of chap," and the young man sank heavily into his chair.

"Well, Charlie, I know that my boy is in the Lord's hands; he will do whatever seems best to himself."

"But you wouldn't wish the lad to die, would you, mother?"

"Of course I wouldn't wish that; but I feel that if the Lord should take him, he is taking him from the evil to come. I've lost four of them, and yet I never dared asked God to leave them; for who could tell what mischief might have come to them if they'd not been taken? Now they are happy for ever; and I shall see them all again!" And as she spoke, the woman's weary face lightened up with a sudden glow, as if reflecting some light that shone upon it from afar.

"But Ben is a good lad; and anyhow, he's been the salvation of me," said Charlie warmly.

"Ay, he's a good lad now; thank God for it!

But who can tell what he might be by-and-by? When I see the way young men so often go astray and break the hearts of them that nursed them, and loved them, and did for them——"

"Go on, Mrs. Pritchard. I know I deserve it all. Go on."

"I didn't mean to say it special in regard of you, Charlie; but now I *have* said it, you know how true it is."

"Yes, it's all true, and a great deal more too. I know I've been a bad son; but I've had a lesson, and mean, by God's help, to make a change. But do you know, Mrs. Pritchard, my own mother never spoke to me like you have done! I sometimes think I mightn't have been quite so bad a chap if she'd been a bit less hard. Well, no, I don't exactly mean that neither, for she was always soft enough with me. But somehow there was no religion, or anything of that sort, in the way she brought us up."

"That's been the way with too many of us, Charlie, and we mustn't judge one another," said Mrs. Pritchard thoughtfully; and then her mind seemed to wander far away.

"But about Ben?" said Charlie, after a very long pause. "I hope he'll get the better of this. It seems a hard thing for a young chap like that to have to die after being delivered, as you might say, out of the grave itself."

"The Lord grant he may be left to us," answered Mrs. Pritchard. "But I say, Charlie Campion," she continued eagerly, "remember you this,—that if that poor child has been the means, under God, of saying a word that has touched your soul and awakened you,

then he has done enough for any one life. And I couldn't do otherwise than thank the Lord, should he be called away, that my child was permitted in his short life to convert a sinner from the error of his ways, and to save a soul alive."

Charlie Campion looked at the excited, eager face in silence. This was a sort of thing he didn't as yet quite understand, and he felt that he'd like to think over it a bit. Just at this moment Ben was taken with a bad fit of coughing, and so his mother hurried away to see what she could do for him. Thus Charlie was left to his meditations. It was Sunday evening, and the house was very still. Lizzie had gone out to church, and little Billy lay like a sleeping lion in his cot. His father looked at him furtively from time to time through the gathering twilight, much fearing lest he should wake and give expression to his feelings of disgust at having been left by his mother. But the little Billy slept on placidly; and Charlie, as he sat and watched the child, found his thoughts wandering back to a time long, long ago, when he could just remember himself a sturdy little tyrant of Billy's age, and very much like him in appearance too, who used to bawl or tease till his mother came and sat beside his bed and hushed him and sung him to sleep.

And then, as the twilight deepened, innumerable memories of that long-buried past came trooping round him, and the air seemed full of spiritual influences. The face of the little sleeper could be seen no longer, and the father sat on in the dark, half asleep and all in a dream, till roused by the sound of voices below. Then the door opened, and his wife entered. He neither moved nor spoke, but

sat quite still, and watched her in the dim light. First she stooped and listened to the child's regular breathing; then she bent over her husband for a moment, and thinking him also asleep, stole softly from the room. Charlie could have been only half awake, for he soon sank into a restless and painful dream. It seemed as though his mother was somewhere close by, and was calling to him; but he could not come—he felt tied down and oppressed with a terrible weight. Then the voice that had been calling seemed to die away and melt into strains of music which soothed and quieted him. Suddenly he woke up; but still the sound of singing was in his ears. He rose and hobbled down the passage. A light streamed through the partially-open door of Ben's room, and thence evidently the sounds proceeded. Charlie entered, and found a little party, consisting of the Pritchard family, his own wife, and wee Jane, engaged in rehearsing the hymns that had been sung at the evening service.

CHAPTER XX.

PREPARING TO PART.

THE little party which had found a sad pleasure in assisting Ben Pritchard's quavering voice during the hymn-singing on which Charlie Campion had dropped in, scarcely realized that when their next Sunday dawned the child would have entered on that eternal Sabbath-keeping that remaineth for the people of God.

On Monday a sudden change for the worse had taken place, and it soon became evident that Ben's short pilgrimage was nearly over,—though how *very* near the end might be, few save his mother dared to think. Mrs. Pritchard, however, who had stood by many a death-bed, was not a woman to be deceived; nor did she strive vainly to deceive herself. For her the bitterness of the struggle was already over. She had given her child to God as into the arms of a loving Creator and merciful Redeemer. She comforted herself with the thought which she had so earnestly impressed on Campion, that the boy's short life had not been in vain if indeed he had been the instrument, under God, for bringing home to his companion, in the hours of danger, those long-neglected truths which now seemed to be taking firm hold on his hitherto wayward heart.

This was the first heavy sorrow that had come to Mrs. Pritchard since the great change that had taken place in her; and now, when the shadow of death was once more creeping over her home, the reality and beauty of her new-found faith shone forth conspicuous. Not indeed that she watched by the death-bed of her youngest child one bit more faithfully than she had in the case of his elder brothers who had gone before. Only *then* half her noisy zeal had been misdirected, and it had at times been painful to see her maudlin tears and listen to her loud complaints; *now* all was quiet tenderness and thoughtful consideration for the sufferer's wants. She did not distress the lad's parting hours by exhibitions of her grief, or weary him by protestations of her love. Indeed, some of the neighbours thought she took it very quietly. *They* couldn't bear to sit there all day long and say just nothing, if it was their child that was being taken. And then it was the more strange because Mrs. Pritchard had always used to be such a feeling, sympathetic sort of woman; nor could it be want of love, for she had always allowed that wee Ben was her favourite. Thus the neighbours talked, and couldn't make it out at all, and that verily because the secret of the Lord is among them that fear him; and Ben and his mother, during those last precious days, kept that secret a good deal to themselves.

During the Friday night poor Ben was terribly distressed. He had slept but little for many hours, and now, when from sheer exhaustion he would drop off for a few minutes, he was sure to be disturbed by dreams, in which the dangers he had gone through

with Charlie Campion were vividly brought before him. He would moan and sob in his sleep: "Charlie, poor Charlie! I say, Charlie man, Charlie Campion, can't you speak? Oh, what can I do for him? I believe he's dead, and I'm here all alone in this dark grave of a place!"

And then, when his mother, hoping to soothe the poor dreamer, whispered that Charlie was all right and safe, the words were evidently heard, for he continued eagerly, with a little laugh,—

"Oh yes, he's all right now. Isn't it lucky I thought of the water-pipe? Now he's better; I've bathed his head. Cheer up, Charlie, old man; God won't forget us. Let me say a hymn to you; it's one of mother's favourites."

Then after a pause the words, repeated in a low sing-song tone, were heard in the silence of the night,—

"Oh happy day, that fixed my choice
On thee, my Saviour and my God!"

Mrs. Pritchard was quite taken by surprise.

"God bless you, my child; God bless you!" she cried aloud as she cast herself on her knees beside the bed.

When she looked up Ben's dark, dilated eyes were fixed on her.

"Mother," he said in a low trembling voice, "you've been praying for me. I heard you say, 'God bless my child,'—at least I fancied I did. Then I woke up and saw you there; and I was so glad, because I had been dreaming about the accident all over again. It's odd I keep dreaming about being down there in

the dark when I think so little about it when I'm awake."

That had struck his mother too, so she said in an interrogative tone,—

"And you don't think much about it then, my son?"

"No, mother, never at all, unless some one puts it into my head. I seem to have no care about the past; and then there's so much else to think about. I think how it will all be when I am gone, and how mother'll do without her Ben."

Here the quavering voice broke down, and then, after a pause, the mother said,—

"You mustn't let that thought fret you, my son. I look at it that the good Lord only lent you to me; and now your work is done, he is taking you back again to himself. He'll not forsake me, Ben; and the thought of you will help to strengthen me for the rest of my journey. We'll meet again, son."

"Yes; we'll meet in heaven. I often think about heaven, and wonder what it will be like. Then there's another thing I think a lot about, that's Charlie Campion's soul; and sometimes I am afraid to go, and would wish to wait a bit, because I feel as though the Lord would ask me first thing about Charlie and what I'd done for his soul. I wonder is it wrong to think like that, mother?"

"Well, Ben, I don't say as it's wrong exactly," said Mrs. Pritchard slowly; "but you mustn't let that trouble you neither. The preparation of the heart in man is of the Lord; we are but his instruments, and when we've done our best we must leave the result in his hands. That's what I feel, Ben; and I think Mr. Crawford would tell you the same."

"Ay, mother," murmured the dying boy; "I believe I have been thinking too much of myself in the matter. It's the Saviour must save both of us, and it's not much that I can do. But Charlie has talked of it all so often, and about the good I done him, that I believe I've grown quite conceited over it."

"No, no, Ben; don't say that. I believe there has been a good seed sown in Charlie Campion's heart; it was sowed *through* you, though not altogether *by* you. You remember the place where it says, 'Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the increase;' so we must even leave it in his hands. Now just let me wet your lips with this, and then perhaps you'll sleep a bit."

The boy took the drink his mother held to his lips, and soon after dropped into a quiet, unbroken slumber.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FAIR MORNING AFTER A STORMY NIGHT.

IT was late on Saturday afternoon when Charlie Campion made his way as softly as possible down the passage towards Ben's door. To all inquiries made during the day—twice by Charlie in his stockings—Mrs. Pritchard had answered through the half-opened door that Ben still slept. Mr. Crawford had been there for a few minutes; and the doctor had also looked in. He shook his head as he gazed on the pale, death-like face, and said it would not do to let the boy sleep too long, lest he should sink from want of nourishment. But he did not actually advise that the sleeper should be wakened, so Mrs. Pritchard sat on, her perplexity increasing as the evening closed in. More than once she had risen determined to wake the boy, but each time she had shrunk back, awed by the calm expression of repose that had settled on his face. At length, as she stood by his side with a spoonful of nourishment ready to put to his lips, Ben opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Mother," he said, "I think I'm going soon, and I'd like to say another word to Charlie before we all bid good-bye."

It was then that Mrs. Pritchard had slipped from

the room a moment to tell Campion that his faithful little friend and companion was awake and asking for him. Having delivered her message, the mother hastened back to the bedside, while Charlie followed a few minutes later, as we have seen.

That Saturday night was wet and tempestuous, and old Mrs. Campion could get but little rest as she lay in her lonely room at the top of the great block of offices where she had so long lived. The sudden change of weather—for it had been bright and sunny the day before—had set all her joints aching; and then, just as she was dropping off to sleep, the rain, dashed against the window by the cruel gusts of wind, would wake her up. The old woman felt completely deserted that night; and as the wind howled in the chimney, and shook the lofty building, a new sensation that was almost fear began to creep over her. She was quite alone. Wee Jane had looked in in the evening; but instead of remaining to talk a bit after tidying up, had hurried away, saying that Ben Pritchard had been “took worse” since the afternoon, and that she must be off to Pine Apple Court. Mrs. Campion let the child go, without telling her that Hugh was out of town on business of his employers, and would not be back till Monday. She had intended to ask Jane to stay the night, but now some feeling that she could not herself define restrained her; so she listened to the girl’s light footstep descending the stair, and then prepared to spend the night alone at the top of that great empty building. For a long time she sat gazing in her old fashion into the glowing embers, and watching the hailstones that came rolling down the chimney, each leaving for an instant a black stain on the red

coal. At length, as the fire died down, and the room began to grow cold, she crept into bed.

All through the night the lonely woman was troubled by thick-coming fancies. Every gust of wind that struck baffled against the solid stone masonry reminded her of the accident at Bateman's buildings; and once she started up wide awake, and trembling in the momentary belief that the bed, with the entire house, was sinking beneath her. Towards morning the storm somewhat subsided, and she fell into an uneasy sleep. But the old dreams continued to haunt her. Charlie was everywhere. Now she saw him a ruddy boy, toddling to meet his father; now he was a well-grown lad, sitting across the corner of the table as of old. Then the storm seemed to swell again, and she saw him dragged out like a corpse from beneath the ruins of Bateman's buildings. Then, half awakened by the shock of that sight, she lay and listened breathlessly for the step she had so often heard, and which of late she had longed to hear again. There was a sound, and it immediately recalled to her that terrible dream she had dreamed when sitting on the doorstep of the ruined house. In a moment she forgot all that had happened since, and shuddered at the thought that she must shortly wake to find herself there in the cold twilight of that awful morning. The sound continued; it grew more distinct, and seemed to be made up of a shuffling of feet and the tapping of a stick. Unable to distinguish past from present, or dream from reality, the old woman shut her eyes tight, as if in terror of some such sight as she had beheld in her former vision.

"Won't you speak to me, mother, after climbing up

all these stairs to wish you good-morning?" said a voice close beside her.

Mrs. Campion opened her eyes, and started up with a shriek, as she beheld her son Charlie, looking pale and haggard as he leaned heavily on a stout stick.

"Is it you, my Charlie, come to life—come to reproach me?"

"Yes, mother, it's me, Charlie; and I trust I've come to life, for I've long been dead—dead in sin. Mother, will you just forgive me, and put out the past, as I trust God has done?"

"O Charlie, what does it all mean? And you look so deathly pale, not the old Charlie at all." And the still bewildered woman drew her thin hand across her face.

"Well, it's a good bit of time since you saw me last, mother. Then, again, I've been up all night, and it's a bad job getting up these stairs of yours with a broken foot. 'Tisn't like the days when I used to take 'em four at a time. I used to shock old Selsby's nerves, didn't I?"

This momentary flashing forth of the old careless, merry tone did more than aught else could to assure Mrs. Campion that it was indeed her very son—her long-lost Charlie—who stood before her.

"So you've come to see your hard, cruel old mother at last, my son? God bless you for it! But where have you dropped from, coming in this way in the morning twilight?"

"Well, mother, if you'll let me sit down, I'll just tell you all about it." So saying, Charlie sank somewhat heavily on the side of the bed, and continued: "You know it got arranged somehow that I was to

come and make it up with you whenever my foot was well enough. But I don't know how long it might have been in getting cured, because, you see, I thought you might have been a little more pressing in your invitations. Then yesterday afternoon Ben sent for me to come and see him; and he made me promise, among other things, that I'd lose no time in making friends with you. Poor dear Ben! he died quite quiet and peaceful at five o'clock this morning. Then I felt I couldn't close my eyes till I had eased my conscience and done as Ben had asked me. So I just started right off as soon as I could get away; and now I'm here, mother, like the prodigal son, to ask your forgiveness."

"It is I have need to ask forgiveness of you, my son," said Mrs. Champion in a trembling voice. "You don't know how hard and cruel I have been to you in my thoughts, many and many's the time."

"But I've been hard and cruel in my actions, and that strikes me as worse," answered Charlie. "Besides, mother, you don't expect me to forget that you saved my life!"

"I think, by God's mercy, it was poor Ben Pritchard saved it; or anyhow it's through him that it has become worth living."

"Ay, mother, that's true," answered Charlie gravely.

It was, as Mrs. Champion had said, but twilight when Charlie entered the room; but the bright sun had risen upon them, warm and cheerful, before mother and son had said all they had to say by way of apology and reconciliation. They might have gone on much longer had not wee Jane come in to get the sick woman her breakfast. She was con-

siderably surprised to find Charlie there instead of Hugh.

* * * *

Mrs. Campion is still living; but if the reader wishes to make her acquaintance, he must no longer seek her in the old room above Mr. Selsby's office. Hugh had so faithfully transacted a quantity of business that had been thrown upon him, owing to an attack of gout which had for a time laid Mr. Selsby aside, that one of the old gentleman's first acts on his restoration to health was to make a considerable addition to the salary of his valuable clerk. So now Hugh and his mother live in a little cottage in the outskirts of the town; and Hugh says he likes the walk to the office. No doubt he likes it the better because there is a 'bus to carry him when the weather is wet or he is tired.

As for Charlie, he too has prospered. No longer "careless," though light-hearted and good-tempered as ever, he has for several years been Mr. Bateman's foreman. Mr. Bateman is not a very rich man; but that his business did not totally collapse after the sad accident to his houses, was chiefly owing to Campion's energy and skill. Charlie has already a considerable interest in the concern; and it seems probable that, as Mr. Bateman grows older, he will soon be altogether his own master.

Charlie is now a busy man; so if you want to see him at leisure, and in all his old flow of fun and spirits, you must choose your time judiciously. Choose it then some Saturday afternoon, when, Hugh being early home, Charlie has brought out Lizzie and the children to spend an afternoon with their grandmother. Look at them as they gather in the tiny

garden at the back of Hugh's cottage. Charlie is the life of the party ; and as he sits on the edge of the table that has been brought out of doors for tea (he likes to rest his foot, which still pains him at times), we are reminded of the attitude in which we first saw him. As for Mrs. Campion, though she never can recover from the effects of that terrible night of exposure, there is on her face an expression of softness and peace such as never had been seen in the old bitter days.

THE END.

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